



**Regarding the Savages:  
Visual Representation of Tasmanian  
Aborigines in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

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## Abstract

Tasmania's unique combination of geography, deep human history and the particular context of British colonial settlement offers a valuable case study of the spread of European philosophy, literary, scientific and artistic traditions through British imperial interests in the South Pacific.

During the 1820s, in order to facilitate economic and social development, the colonial government of Van Diemen's Land attempted the effective removal of all 'wild' Aborigines from the island. A limited anthropological record prior to this period produced a blank ethnographic canvas that was slowly populated with figures owing more to the European imagination and earlier encounters with Indigenous people elsewhere in the empire than to the existential character of Tasmanian Aborigines, their culture and history. Aborigines were depicted through a range of tropes dominated by romantic notions of noble savagery, settler experiences of conflict, the desire for peace and prosperity, and ultimately, for Aboriginal absence. By the end of the century, this had resulted in Tasmanian Aborigines being rendered as tragic characters, emblematic of their own demise – a trope that has persisted to the present day – influencing descriptions across art, literature and science.

Visual representations of Tasmanian Aborigines from the nineteenth-century have proliferated through historical literature, trade and exhibition. However, changing modes of visual literacy, defined by Barbara Stafford as 'a cultural construct, rising or falling with cultural and scientific assumptions and values of a given period',<sup>1</sup> and a dearth of critical art-historical interest in these representations, have led to a limited ability for most observers to contextualize this visual history, or to understand the complexity of this important aspect of Tasmania's visual history. This problem is significant in its consequences for realizing the full value of a diverse body of objects and images in the archive relating to Australian colonial history and their role in

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, 'The Remaining Ten Percent: The Role of Sensory Knowledge in the Age of the Self-Organising Brain', in Jim Elkins (ed.), *Visual Literacy* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

influencing the formation of contemporary social frameworks involving Aboriginal people and attitudes to their treatment in Tasmania.

Several authors, including Tim Bonyhady, David Hansen and Penny Edmonds<sup>2</sup> have advanced knowledge on particular artists working in Tasmania, or on specific representational modes. However, there has been no systematic attempt to construct a critical overview on the subject since the work of Brian Plomley half a century ago.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, only one exhibition (and resulting publication) is known to have been dedicated to the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines in art.<sup>4</sup>

My unique contribution to this task of analysis is to bring an interdisciplinary approach<sup>5</sup> that crosses boundaries between the philosophy of science and the practices of art history. This, coupled with my cultural knowledge as an Indigenous Tasmanian scholar of the context of the people and environments depicted in this visual record, enables a contribution of new knowledge through deeper and richer analysis and interpretation than has been undertaken to date. In particular, I bring this knowledge to the task of examining tensions between desires to decipher colonial images as cultural products, and to understanding them as agents for provoking meaningful response in viewers.<sup>6</sup>

This project is the first significant art-historical study to address a number of key questions examining how Tasmanian Aborigines have been variously characterized across the period of the nineteenth-century, and proposes a number of distinct tropes of representation drawn from earlier encounters with 'savage peoples' by the West. In

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Tim Bonyhady, 'Benjamin Duterrau's Paintings of the Conciliation of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Boyang*, 3 (1979); David Hansen, 'The Picturesque and the Palawa: John Glover's Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point', in Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Penelope Edmonds, 'Failing in Every Endeavour to Conciliate: Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines, Australian Conciliation Narratives and Their Transnational Connections', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 35/2 (2011).

<sup>3</sup> Brian Plomley, 'Portraits of the Aborigines of Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)', *The Burlington Magazine*, 102/682 (1960).

<sup>4</sup> Rhys Jones, 'The Tasmanian Aboriginal in Art', (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> J.C. Schmidt, 'Towards a Philosophy of Interdisciplinarity', *Poiesis & Praxis*, 5 (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Keith Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History* (London: Duke University Press, 2013).



doing so, it engages critically with an existing body of literature that has yet to be subject to a concerted analytical review. At the same time, this thesis builds on seminal work by the small number of art historians, including Bernard Smith,<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Thomas,<sup>8</sup> and Ian McLean<sup>9</sup> who made early considerations of the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines as a component of larger studies, and who provided a starting point for the context and methodology of this inquiry.

This thesis examines a selection of visual records including drawing, painting, sculpture, printing, and photography produced up to the end of the nineteenth-century. By investigating the influence of European ideas through the overlapping traditions of art and science on perceptions of Tasmanian Aborigines and their culture, I identify and problematize major themes emerging from extant literature, and identify limitations in the approaches of earlier contributors. Selected works of key artists are examined in order to analyze how these objects exemplify a range of ideas and values at play in the context of their production. Importantly, older traditions upon which these ideas draw are explored to suggest deeper functions of these representations in promulgating the foundations of Christian empire in a remote antipodean colony.

This project's examination of the records of ethnographic illustration from British and French expeditions, through to the work of a number of colonial artists depicting Tasmanian Aborigines, makes an important contribution to critical understandings of the evolution of ideas about European relationships with nature, place and identity in the Antipodes. Importantly, I offer insights into how these ideas were deployed in response to the particularities of British settlement in Tasmania, and the resulting contrasts between British artistic production and earlier French depictions of the island's indigenous people. This reveals significant changes across the period under

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Thomas, Diane Losche, and Jennifer Newell (eds.), *Double Vision : Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* ed. Phillip Tardiff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Ian Mclean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

consideration and points to the role that visual arts played in documenting and explicating practices that many controversially describe as genocidal.<sup>10</sup>

By interrogating the social, political, philosophical and aesthetic environment from which the visual record of Tasmania's Indigenous history has emerged, I offer a deeper analysis of the function and influence of key traditions and tropes that have become foundational to contemporary ideas about Aboriginal Tasmania.

The results of this investigation reveal that shifting patterns of representation of Tasmanian Aborigines have been informed by a complex history of depiction of indigenous people by Europeans over many centuries prior to the colonization of Australia. These patterns mark significant changes in the deployment of art traditions, scientific and religious ideologies, and colonial policy on the one hand, and changes in how this visual history is read. By describing this process, I seek to enable a more detailed and critical understanding of how and why familiar conceptions of Tasmanian Aborigines have emerged.

Identifying avenues for further research, and offering new and richer interpretations of artworks depicting Tasmanian Aborigines creates opportunities for contemporary Tasmanians to reinterpret the past. In doing so, prospects for a new sense of place on the island beckon through re-evaluating the role of visual history in influencing relationships with Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, and deeper understandings of the implications of colonization. These opportunities have potential relevance across a range of Australian and international colonial contexts.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Ann Curthoys, 'Raphaël Lemkin's Tasmania: An Introduction', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39/2 (2006); Tom Lawson, *The Last Man: A British Genocide in Tasmania* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2014); Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History*.

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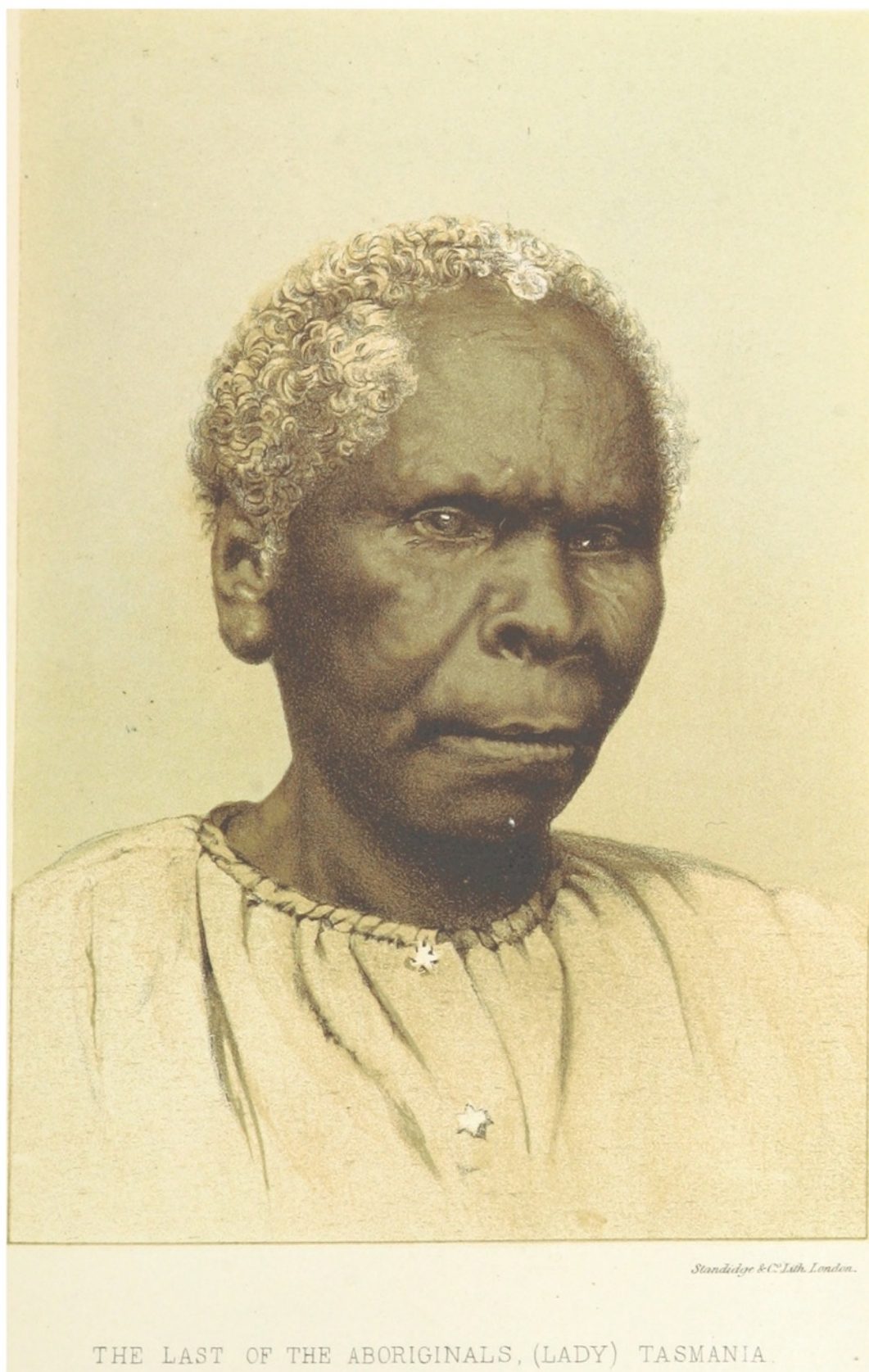


Figure 1 - Standidge & Co, *The Last of the Aborigines, (Lady) Tasmania*, 1871, from a photograph by Charles Woolley, 1866, from Henry Cavendish, 1871.

## *Preface*

Much has been published on the archaeology, ethnography and history of Tasmanian Aborigines, but there has been no concerted focus on the fascinating visual record of my people and our culture. To make matters worse, where images do occur in popular publications, they tend to be used as a simplistic device to illustrate a person, place or event. There is seldom any critical consideration of the context of the image, or the veracity of the story it inevitably tells. As a result, Tasmanian visual history is poorly read and even less well understood.

Reproductions of images from a relatively rich archive of drawings, paintings and engravings that have accumulated since the creation of the first European pictures, drawn by the artist John Webber on Cook's Third Voyage of 1777, are strewn throughout dozens of history books with scarce attention paid to their intrinsic complexity and value as objects of artistic production. Instead, these images too often appear as simple place markers in numerous iterations of a colonial narrative that variously describes Tasmanian Aborigines as stereotypical incarnations of 'noble savagery'. As a result, something important is missing in these texts. Despite this sustained flourish of curious images, often they amount to little more than visual accoutrements to a story in which adequate art history is absent, and any intrinsic identity of Tasmanian Aborigines is lost in a confused kaleidoscope of self-reflection by European artists, institutions and mythologies.

The best example of this is in the use of images of several famous paintings by John Glover (1767-1849). Perhaps more than any visual representations of Tasmanian Aborigines, these paintings have assumed iconic status, coming to define my ancestors at the time of British invasion; their culture, the country they lived in, and by implication, their fate. Yet, in most publications, the reality of these images as art objects, carrying with them a complex set of contexts of production, biographies of artist, subjects and patrons, as well as social and material histories, is largely ignored. They exist in the public imagination in a way that is little different to a photograph in

a tabloid newspaper – illustrative and captioned to be read at surface value, but otherwise stripped of context as objects with their own history.

Perhaps because of the popularity of Glover's images in historical illustration, and most certainly due to his accomplishment as an academy artist, Glover has at the same time also attracted the most art historical interest. Indeed, it was the publication of David Hansen's *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* in 2003 that was instrumental in cementing my commitment to this project.<sup>11</sup> In this edited volume, contributor John McPhee considers Glover's *The Bath of Diana, Van Diemen's Land* (1837)<sup>12</sup> as a work of 'deep symbolic meaning'.<sup>13</sup> Allusion to classical mythology is, of course, not unusual for painters working at the time. However, McPhee's discussion of the painting went further than a cursory acknowledgement of its title. He succeeded in a few short paragraphs in opening up an interpretive space in which the subjects of the painting could assume a place on the stage of world history – a history that was not restricted to colonial subjugation, but telling of their enrolment in grand moral and ideological narratives upon which the Western world has been built. This project proceeds from this idea.

In the context of Glover's artistic production, the Aboriginal subjects in the painting might not be more than unwitting actors, co-opted into a drama and set upon a stage of which they had little knowledge or determination; yet this stage was a profoundly important one. Their presence in such grand narratives pointed me to an important realization; that popular understandings of Tasmanian Aborigines in the nineteenth-century and beyond have been presented through a lens about which I knew very little.

As a descendant of well-known Tasmanian Aboriginal 'chief' and 'clever-man' Manalargena, and his daughter Woretemoeteyenner, I have spent most of my life

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<sup>11</sup> David Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover', in David Hansen and Peter Timms (eds.), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Art Exhibitions Australia Limited, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> See Figure 1. This image is based on a photograph of Wapperty, there is no image known of her sister Woretemoeteyenner, from whom I am descended.

<sup>13</sup> John McPhee, 'The Symbolic Landscape', in David Hansen and Peter Timms (eds.), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Art Exhibitions Australia Limited, 2003). p. 118.



since adolescence looking for ways to understand their world. From the documentary fragments available in the historical archive, it was clear that these were a people with a unique culture, and about which I knew too little. Their distinctness was usually rationalized as a result of ten thousand years of isolation from continental Australia following the end of the last Ice Age and the rising of sea levels that created the island that we now know as Tasmania. My early studies, involving degrees in Life Sciences and Environmental Studies, were aimed at trying to understand the physical world in which they lived – how they influenced their ecology and responded to environmental determinants such as climate and geology. Learning about the botany, zoology and biogeography of the island seemed a necessary step in the absence of the sort of cultural teachers I craved. Men and women like Manalagena (c.1770-1835) and Woretemoeteyenner (c.1797-1847) had been hunted from the Tasmanian landscape, and the rich detail of their ancient culture accumulated over a thousand generations had been mostly lost. I needed to know about the indigenous traditions of the island I understood deeply as my home. This was, by default, a necessary way of making sense of my Aboriginal identity from a perspective two lifetimes distant from the last speaker of a Tasmanian Aboriginal language in my family.

My research in the interdisciplinary field of environmental geography easily overlapped archaeology, anthropology and history. It also enabled me begin to address the ‘real world’ problem of developing a qualitative understanding of how a cultural identity might be distilled from history, forcing me ‘to cross boundaries to create new knowledge.’<sup>14</sup> Exposure to social sciences and the humanities within the field of geography at the University of Tasmania was timely. During my graduate studies there, a number of other projects examining environmental ethics in literature and film, and the development of ‘Vandemonian identity’ by the earliest colonists on the island,<sup>15</sup> sowed the seeds of interest in how a contested cultural identity is influenced by, and expressed through tropes across visual and literary arts.

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Stock and Rob Burton, 'Defining Terms for Integrated (Multi-Inter-Trans-Disciplinary) Sustainability Research', *Sustainability*, 3 (2011). p. 1096.

<sup>15</sup> James Boyce, 'Surviving in a New Land : The European Invasion of Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1823', (University of Tasmania, 1994).

Through my own graduate research on Aboriginal identity and relationships to land,<sup>16</sup> I found that analyzing and interpreting the records left by early European explorers, the journals of missionaries, and the early histories of colonial writers sat easily alongside the values and interests of other Tasmanian Aborigines with whom I worked. A remarkably coherent picture formed for me of how a culture had flowed from a period prior to contact with the West, through to a contemporary setting into which I had been subsumed. However, the more complete this picture seemed, the more frustrating it became.

As my understanding of the world of my ancestors grew, I comprehended how critically important an informed interpretation of the archive was to this. At the same time, I realized that a steady ebbing of visual literacy amongst the wider population was obstructing the ability of observers to ‘read’ the visual archive with any critical acuity. While the work of historians like Lyndall Ryan, Henry Reynolds and others had succeeded in opening up the written archive to more critical analysis of the role of Aborigines in Tasmanian colonial history, there was no equivalent work being done with the visual archive. Connoisseurial and formal analysis of individual artists such as Glover, Benjamin Duterrau (1767-1851) and John Skinner Prout (1805-1876) seemed to have become the norm, leaving a gap in our ability to discern the patterns of meaning that were clearly manifest across the accumulated body of work that we relied on to illustrate a critically important period of Tasmanian history. As a result, it seemed to me that a rich source of insight into European engagement with Aborigines in Tasmania was languishing.

By undertaking a brief survey of the history of representation of blacks, savages, natives and various Others throughout Western history, I have attempted in this project to distil some foundational myths that have had an enduring influence on Tasmania’s visual history; to enable a more enlightened reading of the visual archive of early Tasmanian encounters by Dutch, French and British expeditions, colonial imagery and, by extension, contemporary art. In many ways, I have used this project to map the construction of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity and history in the public

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<sup>16</sup> Greg Lehman, 'Narrative, Identity and Land: Partisan Research for Identifying Palawa Knowledge and the Facilitation of Co-Management.', (ibid.1996).

imagination and how this has influenced colonial identity and national perspectives on our history.

Geographically, the physical extent of the Tasmanian land mass is little different to that of Ireland. Australia, on the other hand, is so large that it cannot be adequately contained within the European imagination. From its very beginnings, despite the alien flora and fauna, the presence of Aborigines who stubbornly resisted efforts to remove them, and the immense distance from Britain, Tasmania established a particular identity that was different to other colonies to the north. It was somehow more familiar. More English. Tasmania seemed determined from an early date to be different to the other colonies. This meant, necessarily, being more British. Yet I do not feel the slightest bit British, and neither do the other Tasmanian Aborigines I know. Something beckoned from this island's visual archive that promised to help explain this.

In writing this thesis, I embarked not only on an art history project, but an exploration of the construct of my own world – conceptions of culture, identity and place. It is my hope that, in doing so, this might serve as a window into a poorly understood phenomenon – that of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal identity, and how it has been salvaged from the wreckage of a period that most Australians are reluctant to acknowledge. Readers will already have heard something of the importance of family, oral history, cultural practice, and the defensive response to racism, dispossession and injustice that has propelled the evolution of this identity during the twentieth century. This thesis is part of a small, but growing body of literature by Aboriginal people that delves into the influence of the visual archive on conceptions of who we are. It is my hope that the questions raised and suggestions made will prompt some re-examination of ideas of Aboriginality that have been imposed on us, how we have conceived of our own cultural selves, and how these things have influenced broader understandings of what it is to have a place in the deeply contested historical terrain of Tasmania.

## *Acknowledgements*

This project is the product of a long-standing desire to understand the contradictory and ambiguous images of an enigmatic people who I count among my ancestors. More so than my German, Irish or British forbears, these Tasmanian Aboriginal people are at the root of my cultural sense of self. This is probably because Tasmania is where I grew up, and where I have lived most of my life. If my family had been drawn back to a Gaelic or Swabian homeland, things might have been very different. But the mountains, valleys and coastlines of Tasmania are what nourished my spirit as I grew older, so it was the pictures of a people indigenous to this island that formed my window to a place in this world – a sense of home.

Family, friends and colleagues over my life have witnessed this consuming fascination. Those who understood, and those who didn't; all played their part in guiding this project to a culmination in the form of this thesis.

My Principal Supervisor, Emeritus Professor Jonathan Holmes convinced me over a decade of spurious appearances at the Tasmanian School of Art that this would be a 'cracker' of a project, and it is his enduring persistence, patience and guidance that has seen it develop into something coherent enough to be called a thesis. My other supervisors, Dr Julie Gough and Dr Martin Walch, as long-standing friends and exceptionally talented art practitioners and thinkers, inspired and provoked me like few others could. Others too numerous to mention who supported and encouraged this project include Lyndall Ryan, Shayne Breen, David Hansen, John McPhee and William Truettner.

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Studies, and Prof. Brian Martin of Deakin University's Institute for Koorie Education also provided welcoming and supportive ports in the storm of competing geographical, financial and intellectual demands that made completing a PhD whilst working full time such a challenge.

The directors and curators of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, National Museum of Australia, Muséum d'*histoire naturelle* du Havre, British Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum all contributed ideas, resources, expertise and advice that were unavailable anywhere else on the planet. Professors Geraldine Johnson and Shearer West of the University of Oxford's Department of the History of Art delivered an incredibly intense and rewarding Masters program without which I would not have had the discipline to make sense of the objects and ideas gathered together by this research. Also, special thanks to Professorial Fellow at Balliol College, and Keeper of Western Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Timothy Wilson, who provided an oasis of kindness and calm grace during my time at Oxford.

Special thanks to Tom Nicholson and Pete Hay for coming on some of this journey - Pete for being Tasmania's finest poet and philosopher, and Tom for his intellectual generosity, friendship, and for initiating and inspiring the collaboration that led to *Interview* (2016).<sup>17</sup>

Most of all, my greatest debt is to my partner Rachael Rose, who offered advice and tolerance without end while I tamed this monster into the form it now takes.

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<sup>17</sup> See Figure 127.

## *Notes on Terminology*

**The Place** – The geographical focus of this study is the island now identified as Tasmania. It was first known in the European imagination as a cape on the coastline of *Terra Australis*, an antipodean landmass that was later named New Holland, and then Australia. After being first charted by Abel Tasman, the region was recognized as *Anthony Van Diemen's Landt*. French navigators called it *Cap du Diemen*, as it was not known to be an island until 1798. The British colony of Van Diemen's Land was gazetted as 'Tasmania' in 1855.<sup>18</sup>

Before this, Tasmanian Aboriginal people had a multitude of names to describe various locations. It is not likely that there was ever a single name used by Aborigines to refer to the island.<sup>19</sup> In this thesis, the names Tasmania and Van Diemen's Land are used interchangeably, as they were from the earliest days of the British colony.

**The People** – Colonists are referred to generally as Europeans, even though many were drawn from populations across the global reach of the British Empire, which extended well beyond Europe. The terms 'White' and 'Black' are avoided as problematic political constructs, as are the terms 'non-Aboriginal' and 'non-indigenous'. Aboriginal is used as the preferred term to describe the people living in Tasmania before British arrival. The term 'indigenous' is used purely as an adjective in this thesis. Use of contemporary Aboriginal words such as 'Palawa' and 'Pakana' are avoided, as there is no certainty that the Aborigines being referred to in the text would have used these terms in the context they are employed today. Other terms such as 'First Nations', 'First Peoples', 'First Tasmanians' are interspersed at literary whim.

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<sup>18</sup> Originally named Anthoonij van Diemenslandt on its discovery by Abel Tasman in 1642, the colony was gazetted as 'Tasmania' in 1855. Terry Newman, 'Tasmania, the Name', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (On line edn.; Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), n.p.

<sup>19</sup> It should also be noted that Aboriginal people also occupied the region during the last Ice Age, when it was indeed a large peninsula of continental Australia. For a discussion of place names and linguistic continuity with other Australian languages, see John Albert Taylor, *A Study of Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) Place Names* (Launceston: John Albert Taylor, 2006).

‘Native’, ‘savage’, ‘half-caste’ and ‘mixed-blood’ are often considered as derogatory in a contemporary context, but are used in this document to reflect the context of the period under discussion.

**Spelling of Aboriginal words** – The wordlists that were made by Europeans during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries provide a multitude of records of vocabularies gathered using varying linguistic methodologies.<sup>20</sup> A contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal *lingua franca* is being developed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, but is yet to be subject to rigorous scholarly interrogation or to gain widespread cultural acceptance. The spelling of Tasmanian Aboriginal people’s names in this thesis follow most common usage in historical literature, or were recorded as ‘native’ names by George Augustus Robinson.<sup>21</sup> For example, the name of the woman ‘Trucanini’ is spelled according to specific information found in the archive.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Brian Plomley, *A Word List of Tasmanian Aboriginal Languages* (Hobart: N.J.B. Plomley and State of Tasmania, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Brian Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> “It will be observed,” remarks Mr. Graves in a letter to the Mercury, “that the writer spells the name ‘Trugaanna.’ This is singular, since I knew her myself for many years, but as no other than Trucanini. Indeed, when dining at my house only a few months before she died, I importuned her so much about the proper pronunciation of her name that she at last grew impatient, rolled and flashed her eye, and called me, right out, a fool. I dare say she was not far wrong in her estimate, but she had already replied half a-dozen times distinctly, ‘Trucanini.’”, Anonymous, ‘Trucanini’s Story of Herself’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 1876 p. 7.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction



Figure 2 - Unknown, *Fern Tree Valley near Hobart Town*, frontispiece, *Last of the Tasmanians; or, the Black War of Van Diemen's Land* by James Bonwick, 1870.

*If this simple narrative of the Tasmanians  
excite some benevolent desire to bless  
the rude tribes left beneath our sway,  
my object is accomplished.*

James Bonwick, 1870.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870).



To live in Tasmania is to exist in the eye of a storm. Famed for its vast wilderness reserves, tranquil lakes and ancient forests, in recent years Tasmania has become an internationally recognized tourist venue and a destination of choice for Australians seeking escape from the clutter of urban life. The cleanest of air, gourmet produce and a thriving culture of literary and visual arts cloak both visitor and resident alike with an assurance that, of all the places in the world, this must be one of the most generous and welcoming. The colony of Van Diemen's Land, founded in 1803 with the arrival of Lt John Bowen (1780-1827) at Risdon Cove would seem to be a jewel in the colonial crown of Britain. But just out of sight of the tourists' gaze, beyond the comfortable lives of citizens, the island harbours a dark and unresolved history. It is a place, like too many others, where unspeakable horrors took place in the name of empire. 'Questions, if uttered, pass unheard. An uneasy and enduring silence prevails.'<sup>24</sup>

It was within a year of the first European settlement that the die had been cast and the fledgling colony took its first confused steps toward conflict with the Tasmanian Aboriginal nations whose lands it was invading. On 3 May 1804, the British at Risdon Cove had their first encounter with a large group of Aborigines. According to Henry Reynolds the group, which included women and children, was 'probably on a hunting expedition'. In Bowen's absence, soldiers opened fire. Estimates of those killed were as high as 'forty or fifty'.<sup>25</sup>

Over the ensuing decades, as the number of settlers increased and the colony's livestock required more expansive areas to graze, conflict with Aboriginal communities inevitably increased. This culminated in Lieutenant Governor George Arthur (1784-1854) issuing a series of proclamations leading to the colony being placed under martial law in 1828, and calling for Aborigines to be expelled by force

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<sup>24</sup> Greg Lehman, 'Tasmanian Gothic: The Art of Australia's Forgotten War', *The Griffith Review*, 39 (2012).

<sup>25</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars* (Ringwood, Victoria, 1995).

from the settled districts 'by whatever means a severe and inevitable necessity may dictate.'<sup>26</sup>

Arthur's proclamations were originally intended to exclude large parts of the island that remained unoccupied by European settlers at that time – providing a resort for Aborigines driven from the areas targeted for pastoral development. However, according to James Boyce, 'its popular interpretation and overall effect was to provide legal immunity and state sanction for the killing of Aborigines wherever they could be found'.<sup>27</sup> The resulting slaughter became known as the Black War and soon came to the attention of Sir George Murray (1772-1846), Secretary of State for the Colonies, who noted that,

The great decrease which has of late years taken place in the amount of the Aboriginal population, renders it not unreasonable to apprehend that the whole race of these people may at no distant period become extinct. But with whatever feelings such an event may be looked forward to by those settlers who have been suffering by the collisions which have taken place, it is impossible not to contemplate such a result of our occupation of the island as one very difficult to be reconciled with feelings of humanity; or even with principles of justice and sound policy; and the adoption of any line of conduct, having for its avowed or for its secret object the extinction of the native race, could not fail to leave an indelible stain upon the character of the British Government.<sup>28</sup>

Sir Murray went further, instructing Arthur to ensure that criminal prosecutions were undertaken against anyone committing murder against Aborigines. The Governor's response was to ignore the directive and embark on a vast military campaign, which became known as the 'Black Line'; forming an armed human chain across the settled districts in order to sweep every Aboriginal person at large onto a peninsula, from which the survivors could be then removed to a remote mission.

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<sup>26</sup> Clive Turnbull, *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines* (Melbourne: Landsdowne Press, 1966). p. 246.

<sup>27</sup> James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2008). p. 266.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Andrys Onsman, 'Truganinni's Funeral', *Island*, 96 (2004). pp. 40-41.

Arthur also engaged the services of a London builder, George Augustus Robinson (1791-1866), who had learned some Aboriginal language with which, he assured the Governor; he could conciliate the natives and bring an end to hostilities.<sup>29</sup> This strategy, like the Black Line, was aimed at removing the Tasmanian Aborigines from their lands to a place where they would no longer threaten settlers. Coincidentally, it was Robinson's dedication to creating a record of his endeavours through the production of a voluminous journal, which provides the most extensive first-hand account of Tasmanian people and their experiences at this period in the colony's history.<sup>30</sup> Robinson, an amateur artist, also furnishes most of the few drawings in existence from the period of the Black War.

Robinson's own record attests to the singular events that unfolded in Tasmania,

The system adopted towards the Aboriginal inhabitants is, I believe, quite unique, history does not furnish an instance where a whole nation has been removed by so mild and humane a policy.<sup>31</sup>

This was the kindest genocide ever conceived. However, Sir Murray displayed considerable prescience in his dispatch to Governor Arthur. The 'indelible stain' proved to be a permeating influence on perceptions of the Van Diemen's Land colony from the time of these events, and of Tasmanian Aborigines – perceptions that endure to the present day. The period of the Black War had a profound influence on colonial artists concerned with depicting Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This thesis is about those artists, their work and the forces that guided their creative hand.

Within a single generation of British occupation, approximately ninety percent of Aborigines alive at the time of British arrival were dead.<sup>32</sup> Over the course of the

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<sup>29</sup> Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> George Augustus Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834 / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley* (Launceston: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966).

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Jeanette Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2007). p. 81.

nineteenth-century, as the colony ‘mopped up’, a lasting legacy was inevitably forged, and the peace and tranquility of the island’s wilderness came to be underpinned by a ghostly absence. For today’s Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the silence of places that were once home to our ancestors remains torn by an anguished cry for understanding and justice.

### *The Visual Record*

While much has been published on the history of Tasmanian Aborigines up to the end of the nineteenth-century, to date there has been no dedicated focus on the considerable body of drawings, paintings, sculptures, prints and photographs that depict the indigenous people and culture of Australia’s southernmost extent. This project aims to address that deficit.

Prior to European arrival in Tasmania, Aboriginal people expressed their relationship with self and the cosmos in common with other indigenous peoples of Australia and around the world. A rich record of rock art, body adornment, ceremony and mythology expressed the inter-relatedness of Tasmanian Aborigines with the constituents of their physical and spiritual world, an inter-connectedness that continues today.<sup>32</sup> With the arrival of European observers in Tasmania, some profoundly different methods of representation were introduced to the world of the First Tasmanians.

The assemblage of early colonial Tasmanian images is important for many reasons. Dating back well beyond the arrival of Bowen’s party at Risdon Cove, it emerges from a series of encounters between Dutch, French and British explorers with a

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<sup>32</sup> Shayne Breen, 'Extermination, Extinction, Genocide: British Colonialism and Tasmanian Aborigines', in Rene Lemarchand (ed.), *Forgotten Genocides: Oblivion, Denial, and Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> H. Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (2nd edition edn.; Halifax: F. King and Son, 1899); Josephine Flood, *Rock Art of the Dreamtime: Images of Ancient Australia* (Sydney: Pymble, 1997) 372; Julie Gough, 'History, Representation, Globalisation and Indigenous Cultures: A Tasmanian Perspective', in Clair Smith and Graeme K. Ward (eds.), *Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Greg Lehman, 'Being Here: Authenticity and Presence in Tasmanian Aboriginal Art', in Amanda Reynolds (ed.), *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Tasmania* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2006).

people and culture that resonated at many levels, some unique, with European ideas about the origin and nature of humankind. This visual record of exploration results from efforts to document and understand Tasmanian Aboriginal culture by practitioners of a science of ethnography that was still in its infancy.<sup>34</sup> Elements of this visual history have been captured in numerous published journals and atlases detailing the voyages of navigators including Abel Tasman (1642), Marion du Fresne (1772), James Cook (1777), William Bligh (1788, 1791), Bruny d'Entrecasteaux (1791-1793), and Nicolas Baudin (1802).<sup>35</sup> These early observations of the appearance, behaviour and technology of Tasmanian Aborigines were strongly influenced by the ideas of Voltaire, Rousseau, Degerando and many others. This period of representation was propelled by an Enlightenment interest in the empirical observation of nature, challenging neo-classical traditions of the noble savage in which, according to Gaile McGregor,

the primitive man is thought on the one hand to be freer, both physically and emotionally – less inhibited, less oppressed by the necessities of labour, less trammelled with constricting conventions; on the other hand, his simple austere lifestyle, devoid of luxury and sophistication, is supposed to inculcate both character and morality.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, the First Tasmanians came to occupy roles in a range of philosophical, divine, social and historical dramas that reflected both the European consideration of

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example John Cawte Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery* (Vol. 2: The voyage of the Resolution and Adventure, 1772-1775; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for The Hakluyt Society 1966); Edward Duyker, *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Du Fresne, 1642 and 1772*, trans. Edward Duyker, Herman & Maryse (Hobart: St David's Park Publishing, 1992); François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere* (London: Richard Phillips, 1809); Brian Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1983); Brian Plomley and Josiane Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793* (Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1993); Abel Janszoon Tasman, *Abel Janszoon Tasman's Journal of His Discovery of Van Diemens Land and New Zealand in 1642*, trans. Jj. De Hoop Scheffer and C. Stoffel (facsimile edn.; Amsterdam: F. Muller and Co., 1898); H. G. Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania* (Hobart: Cat & Fiddle Press, 1973).

<sup>36</sup> Gaile McGregor, *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden: Notes toward a Syntactics of Place* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). p. 12.

self and the search for a defining identity by the new colonists. This drama potentially materializes in the work of artists attached to these voyages of discovery; notably John Webber (1751-1793), Jean Piron (1767?-1795?) and Nicolas-Martin Petit (1777-1804), who established the earliest graphic images of Tasmanian Aborigines in the European imagination. There is extensive art historical scholarship on these artists,<sup>37</sup> and this will be reviewed to identify specific influences on and aspects of the work of these artists to assist in analyzing particularities of the Tasmanian context.

Potent signifiers of distinctive colonial and social processes at play on the island were also established in the visual record. Many of these have become foundational documents in Australian national history. Benjamin Duterrau's history painting, *The Conciliation* (1840) is perhaps the best example, dramatising the culmination of George Augustus Robinson's mission of conciliation to conclude the Black War that had raged on the island by removing Tasmanian Aborigines from their land. Portraits of Aboriginal people from this period by painters including Benjamin Duterrau (1768-1851), Thomas Bock (1790-1855), John Skinner Prout (1805-1876) and Ludwig Becker (1808-1861) contributed a sombre record of a people whose presence on the island was to be almost completely transformed within a few decades as the task of extermination was energetically pursued in Van Diemen's Land. Yet few of these artists have been examined in a way that focuses specifically on their role in influencing the formulation of the historical, social and cultural identities that continue to characterize their subjects in written histories. Only two of these artists:

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<sup>37</sup> Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliott Forsyth, and Bernard Smith (eds.), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988); Colin Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772-1839* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2005); Jean Fornasiero, Peter Monteath, and John West-Sooby, *Encountering Terra Australis: The Australian Voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Matthew Flinders* (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2010); Rudiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* (Vol. 3: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discoverer 1776-1780; Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987); Shino Konishi, 'François Péron and the Tasmanians: An Unrequited Romance', in Ingereth Macfarlane and Mark Hannah (eds.), *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories* (Aboriginal History Monograph 16; Canberra: ANU E Prints, 2007); Muséum D'histoire Naturelle Du Havre, *Baudin in Australian Waters : The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988); Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*; Thomas, Losche, and Newell (eds.), *Double Vision : Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* ; Gabrielle Baglione and Cédric Crémère, *Charles-Alexandre Lesueur: Peintre Voyageur, Un Trésor Oublié* (Le Harvre: Conti, 2009).

Benjamin Duterrau and John Glover (1767-1849) have received focused attention on their contribution to how we understand Tasmanian Aborigines.<sup>38</sup>

Despite this rich body of material just one exhibition, held in 1976, has been dedicated to the appearance of Tasmanian Aborigines in art.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the collective influence of these representations as a powerful and oft-reproduced body of material in the historical archive has yet to be adequately considered in a systematic way. Perhaps more importantly, the ideologies and traditions (academic, visual and literary) that informed the work of these artists has also been neglected, with little work done to continue the important foundations for this field of inquiry that were established by the pioneering work of Bernard Smith.

### *The Noble Savage*

In the preface to the second edition of Smith's *European Vision in the South Pacific*, the author reflected on the period between 1945 and 1959 when he was developing this ground-breaking work. Smith described an 'extreme cultural relativism' that was most commonly expressed with the view that eighteenth-century Europeans saw indigenous peoples of the Pacific as noble savages. He noted,

Even in the eighteenth-century the 'noble savage' was but one of a number of competing and conflicting stereotypes by means of which Europeans sought to accommodate themselves to the existence of the newly-discovered Pacific societies, and it was certainly not the most influential.<sup>40</sup>

Regrettably, obsession with the noble savage, and a simple one-dimensional focus on the trope still persists as a common first and last reference point for most scholars

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<sup>38</sup> Paul Paffen, 'A Grand Illusion: Benjamin Duterrau and the Conciliation', *Melbourne Art Journal*, /5 (2001); Ian Mclean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape', in Peter Timms and David Hansen (eds.), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Art Exhibitions Australia Limited, 2003); Hansen, 'The Picturesque and the Palawa: John Glover's Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point'; Mclean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape'.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, 'The Tasmanian Aboriginal in Art'.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (2nd edn.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

with an interest in Australia's colonial history. Smith's thesis that the experience of such encounters in the Pacific precipitated a seismic challenge of long-established Biblical narratives of origin and racial relations by science and new aesthetic approaches to landscape and portraiture has receded from attention. This is a significant problem in colonial histories that rely on the work of colonial artists for illustration, as it has the potential to severely compromise interpretation of images used to support the presentation of historical evidence.

Historians regularly make errors in the process of interpretation (or ekphrasis) that, as Erwin Panofsky argues, compromise their ability to generate 'understandings of style which only a historical consciousness could have provided.'<sup>41</sup> Observation by many Australian historians of the noble savage in examples of art usually follows a naïve reading of stylistic clues to identify influences of Classicism, a set of broad assumptions about a period, and some awareness of the association of French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau with the term. Inquiry that seeks to make an account of the consequences of colonialism for indigenous people cannot simply rely on a reading of formal elements of an image as a series of cumulative, progressive consequences to understand the relevance of an art object in history. This, as Walter Benjamin warned, constitutes a 'materialistic historiography' that assumes (and justifies) a *status quo*,<sup>42</sup> and has little capacity to acknowledge the 'endless carnage and suffering' of human history in which disjunctive events are continuously portrayed as moments of victory.<sup>43</sup>

Ekphrasis, according to Jaś Elsner, is always rhetorical, involving the use of generic tropes,

to tie them to claims to generalizations both at the opening and the close... (so that) the object discussed... can serve as an emblem of something of significance in respect of the whole tradition.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Erwin Panofsky, 'On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of Visual Art', *Critical Inquiry*, 38/3 (2012). p. 469.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Beiner, 'Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History', *Political Theory*, 12/3 (1984).

<sup>43</sup> David Summers, 'Form: Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description', in Donald Preziosi (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> Jaś Elsner, 'Art History as Ekphrasis', *Art History*, 33/1 (2010). p. 25.



In the case of histories of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the tradition usually being discussed is colonialism. In this way, the noble savage is subsumed as an emblem of the colonizer. The flaw in most historical works that refer to the noble savage then, is the suggestion that they are actually talking about the Aborigine being depicted, when, in fact, they are discussing the colonizer. The rhetorical choices made by the artist (or patron) are described by the historian in an effort to make the object speak, creating a circular ekphrastic process in which the Aborigine being ‘represented’ is unheard. Worse, the desire by the historian to describe an image as a noble savage is,

often the starting point that shapes the discussion, informing the ekphrastic opening and ensuring a circularity by which the argued conclusion is only a restatement of the opening proposition in different terms.<sup>45</sup>

As a result, reference to the trope of the noble savage is generally couched as a sympathetic, if paternalistic observation by a romantic exploration artist. This sits comfortably with a general acceptance of the ‘inevitability’ of the consequences of colonization for indigenous people that was held in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and generally continues today. In my analysis, the moniker of ‘noble savage’ is too often used as a historicistic consolation prize for Tasmanian Aborigines, a form of benign recognition – when in reality, it is a dense and ambiguous term that had been used rhetorically to validate the destructive outcomes of British invasion.

In the following chapters, I will describe how visual tropes of noble savagery and absence have been used to explain and validate the processes of British invasion in Tasmania and their impacts for Aboriginal people. In doing this, I seek to build on and extend Smith’s thesis of European vision by problematizing these tropes to expose how key iterations of the noble savage and absence developed and became key to colonial (and continuing) attitudes to Aborigines in Australia. Because of its intense and particular history, Tasmania provides a unique nationally and internationally relevant case study for inquiry into the role of art in empire.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Just as important is Smith's insistence in his scholarship that the value of our examination of European visual records in the Pacific comes not just from mapping the impact of Europe on the region and its native peoples, but in understanding the impact of artistic practices on Europe's vision of its own history in the region. This idea is particularly relevant for understanding the Tasmanian context, in which the narrative of extinction associated with Tasmanian Aborigines has shaped scholarly interest so thoroughly. Apart from diverting interest (and recognition) away from the survival of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, evidence in the visual record of Aboriginal adaptation, growth and development was overlooked in favour of showing Aborigines as primitive and backward. An example of this can be found in discussion of Aboriginal adoption of European dress, which is often described in terms of the grotesque, rather than as evidence of social change.<sup>46</sup>

The point is that art historical scholarship too often neglects to reflect on the function of the complex trope of savagery in serving to underline the image of Europeans as standard-bearers of civility. The Aborigine who wears an English coat is considered to be 'mistaken' in exercising such agency. As such, the trope of noble savagery transforms a capacity for cultural change to an expression of foolishness – as if an Aborigine can never understand the value of clothing. This approach is described by Smith as an aspect of 'hard primitivism', in which Australian Aborigines were framed as the most depraved and ignoble of the Pacific races.<sup>47</sup>

### *Absence*

As Edward Said has pointed out so compellingly, in order to understand colonial attitudes to the Other, it is first necessary to understand the colonial culture's perception of itself.<sup>48</sup> In Australia, and Tasmania in particular, an almost obsessive focus has been maintained on investigating the triumph over, or domination and oppression of indigenous cultures. All of these concerns, however sympathetic, are predicated on the necessary superiority of Western progress. Yet this focus is seldom

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<sup>46</sup> Roslynn Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Sandy Bay, Tas: Tasmania Polymath Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

interrogated critically to identify the sources of such predicates in visual culture, or to explain their stubborn persistence. Smith's observation on the trope of the noble savage as a dominant presence in art historical narratives is key to this challenge if we are to accurately explore how European attitudes have contributed to shaping contemporary understandings and perceptions of indigenous cultures.

This project takes the Tasmanian setting as a powerful and informative case study by examining a selection of key works by colonial artists active in Tasmania during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, and teasing out the constellation of interaction with visual and literary traditions, ideologies, contemporary events, imperial administration, and the artistic environment to identify influences on the visual representation of Tasmanian Aborigines.

As discussed above, a small number of authors have paid considerable attention to John Glover, an artist who perhaps more than any other has captured the public's imagination of what was lost from the Tasmanian landscape with the removal of traditional Aboriginal people from their homelands by the 1830s.<sup>49</sup> Yet, while these authors linger on the rich detail of Glover's interaction with Aboriginal people, his accumulated sketches and the contribution of Aboriginal figures to the picturesque style in a Tasmanian setting, they seem to fail to notice that, prior to Glover's work, Aborigines were almost completely absent from Tasmanian landscape painting. It is as though Glover pasted his native figures into a visual *terra nullius* where, prior to European arrival, they had no presence. The authors mentioned above, along with earlier authors such as Geoffrey Dutton and Tim Bonyhady, seem to have missed this and its important relationship with articulation of the idea of the savage in the Tasmanian colony of Van Diemen's Land.<sup>50</sup> The limited quantity of scholarship undertaken in recent times on Tasmanian colonial art further demonstrates the need

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<sup>49</sup> Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover'; Ian Mclean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape', in Peter Timms and David Hansen (eds.), *ibid.*; John Mcphee, *The Art of John Glover* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>50</sup> Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape Painting, 1801-1890* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image: Australian Painting, 1800-1880* (Chippendale, NSW: Ellsyd Press, 1987); Geoffrey Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1974).

for more critical engagement with these issues.<sup>51</sup> As a consequence, a large body of colonial art that does not include Aboriginal figures has never been considered as relevant to the treatment of Aboriginal people and their culture.

This thesis draws attention, for the first time, to the almost complete absence of Tasmanian Aborigines that occurs in the multitude of colonial landscape and portraiture painting between the establishment of the British colony in 1803 and the end of the Black War in 1832 – a date that coincided with the re-inscription of Aborigines into Tasmania's visual history. The proliferation of Aboriginal representation for several decades after this date occurred ironically (and consequently) at a time when Aboriginal people had been reduced dramatically in number. By contrasting this with the rich record of imagery of Tasmanian Aborigines prior to 1803, I investigate in detail the visual excision of Aborigines from the island between 1803 and 1824, and how this presages the physical extermination that began to be systematically practiced from around the end of this period until the conclusion of the Black War.

### *Doomed*

The last glimpses of Tasmanian Aborigines born before or around the time of the British invasion of Tasmania were recorded more than ten years after the introduction of photography to the island in 1846.<sup>52</sup> The most well known early photographs were taken at Oyster Cove by Tasmania's first Bishop, Francis Russell Nixon (1803-1879), and displayed at the London International Exhibition in 1862. More intimate studio portraits, including those of Trucanini (c.1812-1876) were made by locally-born photographer Charles Alfred Woolley (1834-1922) in 1866. Woolley's images were highly successful and used to illustrate the earliest international publications on Tasmanian Aborigines by Enrico Giglioli and James Bonwick.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography*; Amy Tritton, 'Palimpsest: Benjamin Duterrau's Portrayals of Aboriginal People', (University of Tasmania, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers, 1840-1940* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1995).

<sup>53</sup> Enrico Giglioli, *I Tasmaniani: Cenni Storici Ed Etnologici Di Un Popolo Estinto* (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1874). James Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884).

These visual records therefore had a profound influence on the perception and description of Tasmanian Aborigines in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. In particular, Woolley's portraits of Trucanini (see fig. 110) played a key role in cementing her in the public imagination as the 'last of her race', a caption regularly added to reproductions of her image on *cartes de visite* at the time, and persistently quoted in historical literature today. This established a powerful narrative of extinction that persists today, despite the continued cultural presence of the descendants of her people.

The prevailing sentiment during this latter part of the nineteenth-century established a third prevailing visual trope of representation for Tasmanian Aborigines. This trope built upon the particular expressions of savagery that were consistently applied to the survivors of colonial aggression, describing their inevitable and necessary decline as a primitive people who were doomed not only by their own inferiority, but also responsible for their own decline. The sentiment generated by this period was embraced enthusiastically and persistently by Tasmanians, and had continued unabated into twentieth-century representation. Unambiguous evidence of this can be found in Tom Haydon's (1938-1991) film *The Last Tasmanian* (1978), in which Dr. Rhys Jones presented a 'cultural degeneration thesis (that) preceded a horrific story of colonial genocide ending in the Aborigines total extinction.'<sup>54</sup> Jones drew on his archaeological research to extend the trope of savagery into the twentieth-century by asking,

Even if Abel Tasman had not sailed the winds of the Roaring Forties in 1642, were they in fact doomed – doomed to a slow strangulation of the mind?<sup>55</sup>

Since the nineteenth-century there has been a proliferation of artwork and historical literature engaging with the dramatic story of Tasmanian Aborigines and their experience of colonization. This work, particularly since the 1970s when it was stimulated by events surrounding the centenary of Trucanini's death, has explored a

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<sup>54</sup> Rebe Taylor, 'Reliable Mr Robinson and the Controversial Dr Jones', in Anna Johnston and Mitchell Rolls (eds.), *Reading Robinson: Companion Essays to George Robinson's Friendly Mission* (Hobart: Quintus, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Rhys Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', in R.V.S. Wright (ed.), *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers* (Canberra: Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, 1977).

diverse range of social, historical, mythological and personal themes. These, in similar ways to Haydon's film, reflected on the idea of a continuing presence of Tasmanian Aborigines in the public imagination and the tensions that this continues to give rise to. While this material is not considered in the current study, it is hoped that the results of my work will lead to a more informed and critical treatment of twentieth-century representations of Tasmanian Aborigines in future scholarly inquiry.

Perhaps more importantly, it is also hoped that a better understanding of the history of visual representations of Tasmanian Aborigines will assist commentators and researchers on contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal identity and culture to more critically reflect on common attitudes to, and perceptions of the subject. Such understandings should also, as Bernard Smith and Edward Said have pointed out, be useful in reflecting on those aspects of Tasmanian identity that are frequently referred to as 'non-Aboriginal'.

### *Relevance*

Interrogation of the construction and representation of Aboriginal identity by white Australia has received considerable attention,<sup>56</sup> including some application of Foucauldian theories<sup>57</sup> and analysis of 'Aboriginality' as a construct arising from

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<sup>56</sup> Gillian Cowlishaw, 'Introduction: Representing Racial Issues', *Oceania*, 63/3 (1993); M. Dodson, 'The Wentworth Lecture. The End in the Beginning: Re(De)Finding Aboriginality.', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* /2 (1994); Marcia Langton, "Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television" : *An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and About Aboriginal People and Things* / by Marcia Langton, ed. Commission Australian Film (North Sydney, NSW :: Australian Film Commission, 1993); M. Langton, 'Why 'Race' Is a Central Idea in Australia's Construction of the Idea of a Nation', *Australian Cultural History*, 18 (1999); A. Lattas, 'Essentialism, Memory & Resistance', *Oceania*, 63/3 (1993); M. Meadows, *Voices in the Wilderness: Images of Aboriginal People in the Australian Media* (Greenwood: Westport, 2001); Lynette Russell, 'Australian Aborigines: New Perceptions & Altered States', *Current Anthropology*, 35/2 (1995); Lynette Russell, *Savage Imaginings : Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aboriginalities* (Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Bain Attwood and John Arnold, 'Power, Knowledge & Aborigines', *Journal of Aboriginal Studies*, Special Edition (1993); C. Fforde, 'Collecting, Repatriation & Identity', in C. Fforde, Hubert J., and P. Turnbull (eds.), *The Dead & Their Possessions* (Routledge, 2002).

interaction between white and black Australians.<sup>58</sup> The 'legacy of definition' and 'the prison knowledge builds'<sup>59</sup> has been identified, and whiteness studies has provided extensive contribution to understanding of the use of racial notions of 'superiority' as central to construction of white identity, with significant research in this area in the Australian context.<sup>60</sup> Research on the politics of representation, recognition and difference has examined the role of identity as a powerful site of struggle for social justice, within which notions of 'authenticity' can be regarded as increasingly significant actors.<sup>61</sup> A range of disciplines (anthropology, indigenous studies, cultural and media studies, racism studies) consider issues surrounding Australian Aboriginal identity. However, much less work has been done on the nature and impact of the discursive environment surrounding the construction of Aboriginal identity and, in particular, the role of the visual archive in influencing this.

The approach to racialised notions of identity employed in this thesis draws strongly on the work of cultural theorist, Stuart Hall. In his *Formations of Modernity*, Hall writes,

Cultural identity is a matter of becoming, as well as being. It belongs to the future as much as the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo transformations.<sup>62</sup>

Tasmanian Aboriginal culture was continually influenced by its contact with the economic and political power expressed through European colonization. Tropes of savagery, absence and doom have informed this transformation throughout its

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<sup>58</sup> Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008); M. Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Dodson, 'The Wentworth Lecture. The End in the Beginning: Re(De)Finding Aboriginality'.pp. 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Whitening Race. Essays in Social & Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005); L. Russell and M. Fee, 'Whiteness' & 'Aboriginality' in Canada & Australia: Hybrid Identities, Hybrid Genres', *Feminist Theory*, 8 (2007).

<sup>61</sup> Cowlshaw, 'Introduction: Representing Racial Issues'; Langton, 'Why 'Race' Is a Central Idea in Australia's Construction of the Idea of a Nation'; F. Merlan, 'Indigeneity: Global & Local', *Current Anthropology*, 50/3 (2009).

<sup>62</sup> Stuart Hall, *Formations of Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 1992). p. 225.

manifestation in the nineteenth-century, and through to its expression today. Drawing on the sociology of Durkheim, Langton refers to this dysfunction of this engagement as 'intersubjectivity'. She argues that 'Aboriginality arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue'.<sup>63</sup> This occurs extensively through engagement with visual cultures. A key difficulty in considering artistic representations of Tasmanian Aborigines lies in identifying not only how these intersubjectivities manifested at the time of artistic production, but also as viewers of this material today. Each of these present moments of intercultural dialogue in which artist, subject and viewer exercise varying degrees of agency.

As Edward Said proposed, culture, self and national identity are always produced in relation to its 'Others'. Said insisted that,

the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity ... involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from 'us'.<sup>64</sup>

In the process of meeting and returning the colonial gaze, Aboriginal people were subsumed by the act of constructing identities as Other to the colonial self. David Hollingsworth<sup>65</sup> described Aboriginality in terms of three discourses – of descent, of culture-tradition and of resistance. It is this resistance, and what Spivak calls 'strategic essentialism' that has played a large part in influencing the expression of Aboriginal identity today.<sup>66</sup> The role played by the visual archive, how it has been interpreted by non-Aboriginal people, and how these interpretations have been

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<sup>63</sup> Langton, *"Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television": An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and About Aboriginal People and Things* / by Marcia Langton. p. 98.

<sup>64</sup> Said, *Orientalism*. p. 332.

<sup>65</sup> David Hollingsworth, 'Discourses on Aboriginality and the Politics of Identity in Urban Australia', *Oceania*, 55 (1992).

<sup>66</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (eds.), *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1995).



contended by Aborigines has yet to be subject to a systematic analysis. An important exception to this can be found in the exergesic work and art practice of Tasmanian Aboriginal artist Julie Gough.<sup>67</sup>

As Gerald Sidler points out, there occurs a paradox whereby the presentation of imagery that is preferred by Europeans acts to underline their authority over Aboriginal identity. Offering the viewer an account of resistance to colonial oppression suffers a central contradiction. As Sidler puts it,

ordinarily the constructed, glorified past is interwoven with symbols and social imagery drawn from within the process of being dominated; (reconstructing) the historical identity in resistance to, and partial separation from domination... is to reconstruct domination.<sup>68</sup>

The resistance by savages to colonial invasion, seen through the rhetorical interpretation of colonial imagery serves to exemplify Sidler's contention. What is missing in most reception of the colonial visual archive is the existential reality of Aboriginal lives. The exercise of agency by native people encountering European exploration or invasion is usually ignored through the practice of this rhetoric by constructing Aboriginal figures either subservient to, or in opposition to the processes of empire. Neither of these figures, which I investigate in the following chapters, adequately accounts for the Aboriginal experience of encounter, colonization or war.

Stuart Hall contends that only a non-unified conception of identity allows a proper understanding of 'the traumatic character of the colonial experience'. According to Hall,

cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture... not an essence but a positioning.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Julie Gough, 'Transforming Histories: The Visual Disclosure of Contentious Pasts', (University of Tasmania, 2001).

<sup>68</sup> Gerald Sidler, 'Identity as History: Ethnohistory, Ethnogenesis and Ethnocide in Southeastern United States', *Identities*, 1/1 (1994). p. 118.

<sup>69</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990). p. 19.

This thesis investigates this positioning through a detailed examination of the key aspects of the visual archive of colonial Tasmania. Comparative contexts in Classical and Medieval Europe, the Americas and the Pacific are also surveyed to explain how European ideas about native peoples in the Tasmanian context underwent significant development between the sixteenth and eighteenth-centuries as European powers extended their global trade interests. In doing so, considerable attention is given to the invention of ideas of savagery in Classical Greek traditions, and how these formed powerful mythological foundations for the representations of savagery considered in this study.

The scope of the study also includes a brief survey of self-representation by Tasmanian Aborigines at the time of early European encounter, paying particular attention to colonial records of Tasmanian Aborigines by the French and British artists, analyzing the relevance of influential themes including those responding to the idea of noble savagery and the tensions between academic and scientific objectives in ethnographic documentation,<sup>70</sup> the French Revolution,<sup>71</sup> and British ‘course of Empire’.<sup>72</sup>

### *Conceptual Framework*

This project looks to the analysis of narrative that emerged from Russian formalists of the 1920s. As an alternative to a focus on the meanings conveyed by narratives, their methods explored abstract tools that recognized themes and structure in mythological tropes. One of the most influential works emerging from this approach was Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*, which considered Slavic fairytales as a series of functions.<sup>73</sup> This interest was developed further by the American literary school of New Criticism, with Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* contributing a series of schemes for the analysis of Western literature and providing tools for the examination of representations and extra-literary forms of narrative understanding, including

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<sup>70</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*.

<sup>71</sup> John Keegan and Joseph Darracott, *The Nature of War* (London: Jonathon James Books, 1981).

<sup>72</sup> Hansen, 'The Picturesque and the Palawa: John Glover’s Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point'.

<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (2nd ed. edn.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

historiography.<sup>74</sup> The French Structuralist school, deploying the linguistic theory of Saussure, usefully focuses on narrative as a structure of binary oppositions formed by the operation of metaphor and metonymy.<sup>75</sup> According to Kevin Murray this approach supports established inquiry into the role of mythological story-telling in the reproduction of culture.<sup>76</sup> The most attendant extant work to this idea, while not specifically acknowledging its Structuralist approach, was Geoffrey Dutton's *White on Black* (1974).<sup>77</sup> Through his thematic approach to chapter headings, Dutton creates discursive figures within which to group the works in his book. He refers in these to 'savages', 'degeneration', 'Whitefellow's friend', and 'last camping grounds of a dying race', although he does not recognize John Skinner Prout, or any of the Tasmanian photographers in this category.

Dutton's book was the first and possibly only major publication in Australia to recognize the need to examine the rhetorical dimensions of the European gaze other than Bernard Smith's volumes. His earlier published work on S. T. Gill (1818-1880) and Russell Drysdale (1912-1981), both of whom produced a large body of work exploring the representation of Australian Aborigines, ideally positioned him for the important contribution he made with *White on Black*, and the consequent inspiration that this book provided to this current project.

Considerable work in the social sciences has focused on the complex relationship between discourse, knowledge, and power, particularly through the work of Michel Foucault. For Foucault, the episteme (or mode of discourse that is characteristic of a particular way of thinking) appears across 'a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society'.<sup>78</sup> The project considers cultural identity as constituted by discourse, and views discourse from a Foucauldian

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<sup>74</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory : The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

<sup>75</sup> Roland Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History*, (1974).

<sup>76</sup> Kevin Murray, 'Narrative Positioning: The Ins and Outs of Identity Construction', in J Smith, R Harre, and Luk Van Langenhove (eds.), *Rethinking Psychology: Volume 1 – Conceptual Foundations* (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>77</sup> Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art*.

<sup>78</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Foucault: Power, Knowledge & Discourse', in Margaret Weatherall, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2010). p. 73.

perspective in order to understand its inter-relationship with power/knowledge and societal relationships, whether institutionalised through the action of colonial governments, or expressed between individuals and groups. When these refer to the same object, have the same style, support a strategy and have a 'common institutional, administrative, or political drift and pattern' they belong to what he termed the same discursive formation.<sup>79</sup> It is from these discursive formations that visual tropes derive their social influence.

Simply put, in adopting a Foucauldian approach, what is 'known' in a particular period about 'Aborigines' has a bearing on how people are regulated and controlled (or regulate and control themselves),

knowledge does not operate in a void...it is put to work, through certain technologies and strategies of application, in specific institutions, historical contexts and institutional regimes.<sup>80</sup>

The institutions of art practice, exhibition and publication are under-recognized as sites of power in colonial Tasmania. This project maps and investigates those sites of power through the discursive formations of the tropes discussed above. My contention is that despite the significant changes that have taken place in the relationships between Aboriginal people and the colonial state, a discourse of deficit, centred in the trope of a doomed race continues to be the dominant discursive formation for Aboriginality in Tasmania, and that until this undergoes a formative shift, it will continue to impede relations as it acts to maintain and regulate what should by now be long redundant relations of colonial power.

Foucault's analysis is also of importance as it does not conceptualise power only in the form of a hierarchical chain, but as deployed and exercised as a lattice or network<sup>81</sup> indicating, as Hall has noted, that 'all touched by it are caught up in its

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<sup>79</sup> Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, *Michel Foucault* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984). p. 84-85.

<sup>80</sup> Hall, 'Foucault: Power, Knowledge & Discourse'. p. 76.

<sup>81</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980). p. 98.

circulation, both the oppressors and the oppressed.’<sup>82</sup> Foucault’s work shifted attention away from large scale strategies of power ‘towards the many, localized circuits, tactics, mechanisms and effects through which power circulates’ – the ‘microphysics of power’ that articulate power relations that ‘go right down to the depths of society’.<sup>83</sup> The artistic production at work in colonial Tasmania, and the loosely-regulated involvement of colonists in the extermination of Tasmanian Aborigines serve as examples of such ‘microphysics’ at work.

According to Foucault, discourse must be assessed across ‘a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society’<sup>84</sup> to see whether these refer to the same object, have the same style, support a strategy and have a ‘common institutional, administrative, or political drift and pattern’.<sup>85</sup> Herein is the value of this project in undertaking a systematic analytical survey of a collection of work by exploration and colonial artists. Viewed in isolation from each other, catalogue-based analysis of individual artists offers limited scope for the identification of such patterns and strategies, the sources from which they proceed, or their implications for the present.

In concluding this thesis, I will return to the question of current implications for contemporary Tasmanians, including Aboriginal people, and briefly consider what might be learned from this study in terms of relationships with history, cultural identity, memory and place. I will also discuss a number of recommendations that emerge from this project for further research on the visual representations of Tasmanian Aborigines.

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<sup>82</sup> Hall, 'Foucault: Power, Knowledge & Discourse'. p. 77.

<sup>83</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punishment* (London: Tavistock, 1977). p. 27.

<sup>84</sup> Hall, 'Foucault: Power, Knowledge & Discourse'. p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Cousins and Hussain, *Michel Foucault*. p. 84-85.

## Chapter 2 - Empire and Encounter

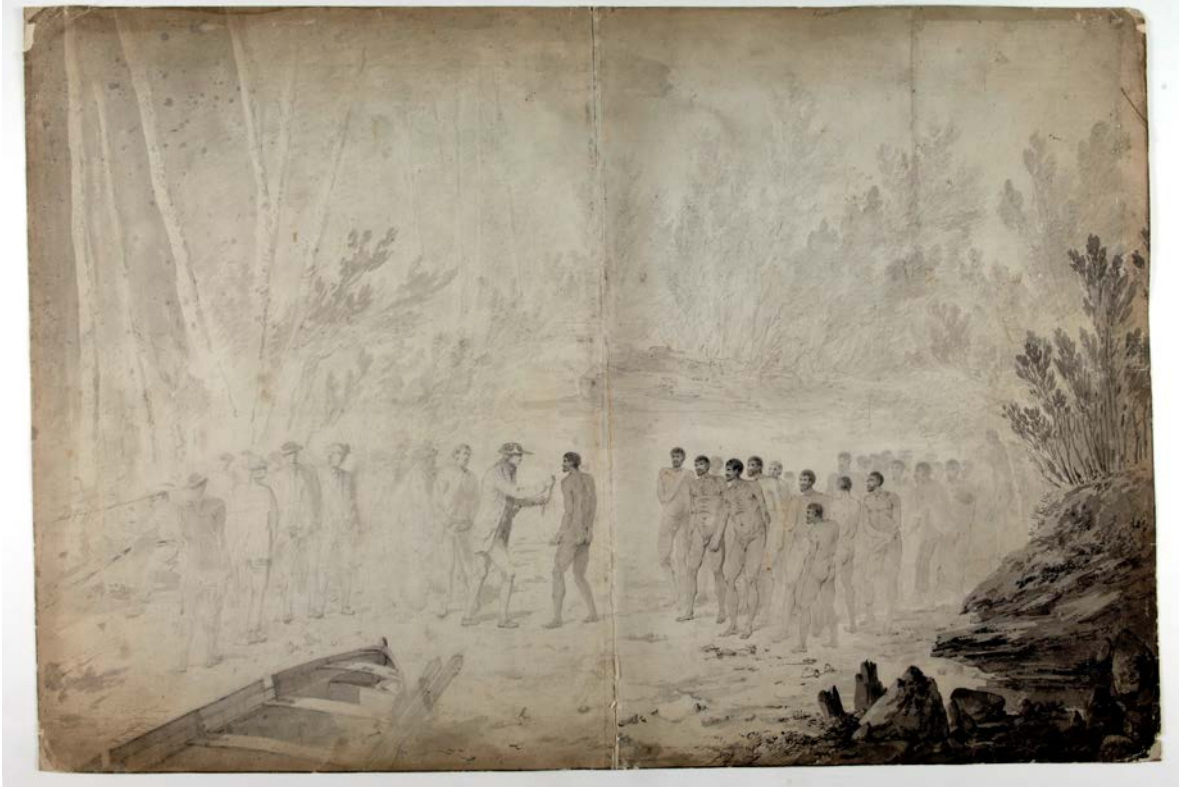


Figure 3 - John Webber, *Capt. Cook's interview with natives in Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land, January 29, 1777*, pen and wash drawing on cartographic paper. Admiralty Library Manuscript Collection, Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth.

*...counterfeited according to the truth...*

John White, 1587<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> John White, Cartographer and Governor of the Roanoke Settlement, 1587. Cited in Paul Hulton and David Beers Quinn, *The American Drawings of John White, 1577-1590* 2vols. (London, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Trustees of the British Museum, 1964). Frontispiece.

The documentation of Tasmania's colonial history is habitually commenced with a discussion of European arrival. The story of social and economic development of this remote outpost of empire has its roots in the British beachhead at Risdon Cove (see Chapter 4). This, the first official British settlement<sup>87</sup> in Van Diemen's Land, constituted a small violent corner in a canvas that unfolded with the establishment of Hobart Town and Launceston to reveal a contradictory and ambiguous picture of escalating frontier conflict over nearly three decades. During this time Tasmanian Aborigines, sole local adversaries of Britain's colonial project, were conspicuously absent from the visual record.

The rapid expansion of the sealing trade, coastal whaling, pastoralism, and a shift from transportation of convicts to the immigration of free settlers brought with it a flourishing of capital and certainty; and an escape from those first, faltering decades of the colony's troubled birth. Aboriginal people were intimately involved in each of these building blocks of prosperity but, like the empty landscapes portrayed by picturesque painters of that period, the place of Aborigines in colonial growth is obscured in the archive. Where mention is made, it almost invariably involves accounts of a ragged resistance by savages intent on the destruction of industry.

The evolution of a dark and violent portrayal of Aboriginal Tasmania that emerges from the period 1804 to 1832 is considered in more detail in later chapters. The resulting idea was of an entrenched enemy, derided and feared amongst settlers, to be expunged visually and then bodily from the island. This culminated in a war that involved, ultimately, almost every white man in the colony; an outcome that could not have been readily anticipated from the first tentative representations of Tasmanian Aborigines that were created in the late eighteenth-century. It is as though a people once described as archetypal 'children of nature', and lauded for their 'friendly disposition' and simple, uncomplicated lifestyle, were forgotten and replaced by spectres from some other time and place.

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<sup>87</sup> Sealers had established an earlier camp at Kent's Bay on Cape Barren Island in 1798. However, this was used as a temporary base and was never intended as a permanent settlement. See Patsy Cameron, *Grease and Ochre: The Blending of Two Cultures at the Colonial Sea Frontier* (Launceston, Tas.: Fullers Bookshop, 2011).

To understand the deep contradictions inherent in such dynamics within early European narratives of Tasmania's visual history, it is necessary to examine the history of representations of indigenous society on the island, dating back to a blank visual canvas created in 1642. By doing this, it is possible to identify a range of ideas that these first representations sought to articulate and, most importantly, the sources from which nineteenth-century European visual rhetoric proceeded.

In this chapter, I will investigate works produced by a number of artists travelling with navigators who visited the island prior to the establishment of the first British colony at Risdon Cove. By identifying key ideological and visual traditions influencing their work, it will be shown that the trope of representing Tasmanian Aborigines as 'noble savages' not only drew strongly on the experiences of the British in their North American colonies, but on a rich and diverse history of encounters, reaching back to Europe's medieval imagination and Classical mythologies of the Antipodes. Refined by French literature, and further influenced by the establishment of the British Royal Academy, these representations manifested in exceptional ways at the southern-most extent of French exploration and then British colonization; establishing a distinct place for Tasmanian Aborigines in the European vision of empire in the South Pacific, and creating a complex and lasting art historical legacy.

However, before examining this representation through the multifaceted lens of European vision,<sup>88</sup> it is important to acknowledge that, like all human cultures across the world, Aboriginal people in Tasmania already had their own complex visual systems of self-representation. These were poorly apprehended in the nineteenth-century and, even today, continue to be considered as artifact, rather than artwork. Considering these indigenous expressions is not only necessary as an affirmation of the capacity for Aboriginal reflexive expression (too often lost in the European fascination for indigenous cultural production merely as exotic artifact), it is also vital in order to account for the influence of such expressions on European attempts to picture Aboriginal people and culture in the midst of colonial endeavor.

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<sup>88</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*.



## *A Sense of Self*

Tasmania's visual history did not start with Captain Cook's arrival on the island in 1777, or result from visits by preceding European navigators, despite popular synergies with Australia's imaginative colonial origin story. Numerous naval journals and narrative accounts generated by the voyages of Dutch, French and British navigators, together with the earliest histories of Van Diemen's Land,<sup>89</sup> acknowledge the pre-existence of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their material cultural expression. However, their relevance to the story of the colony's history is superficially contextualized, mostly in terms of opposition to settlement and often *ad hoc* ethnographic records of their lifestyles. It is not until the publication of volumes dedicated to the subject of Tasmanian Aborigines<sup>90</sup> appeared at the end of the nineteenth-century that their experience of colonization began to be examined in more systematic detail.

However, none of this indicated a capacity on the part of European chroniclers at the time to consider that Aborigines might have their own histories, occurring independently of European encounter. This idea simply did not exist until the science of anthropology began to take an interest in this as mythology.<sup>91</sup> There was even less appreciation of self-representation by Tasmanian Aborigines, of themselves and their world.

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<sup>89</sup> See, for example James Bischoff, *Sketch of the History of Van Diemen's Land* (London: John Richardson, 1832); John West, *The History of Tasmania* (Vol. II; Launceston: H. Dowling, 1852); James Bonwick, *The Bushrangers : Illustrating the Early Days of Van Diemen's Land* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1856); James Fenton and James Backhouse Walker, *A History of Tasmania from Its Discovery in 1642 to the Present Time* (Hobart: J. Walch, 1884); Henry Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824 to 1835 Inclusive During the Administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur (in 3 Parts)*, ed. George Mackaness (Facimile, 1978 edn.; Dubbo, NSW: Review Publications, 1835).

<sup>90</sup> James Bonwick, *The Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870); Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*; Gigioli, *I Tasmaniani: Cenni Storici Ed Etnologici Di Un Popolo Estinto*; James Erskin Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &C., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania* (Hobart: Henn and Company, 1875); Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*.

<sup>91</sup> For the earliest systematic collection of Tasmanian Aboriginal ethnography, see Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*.

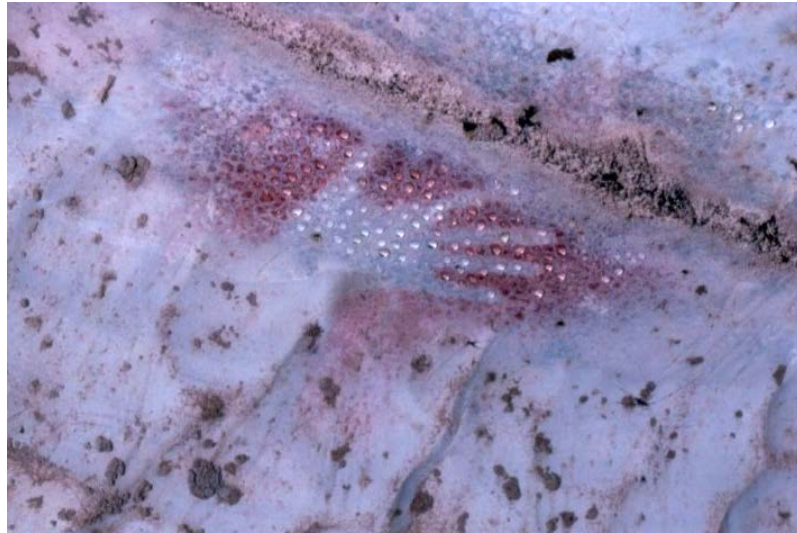


Figure 4 - Hand Stencil, Wargata Mina Cave, Cracroft River, Tasmania. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Tasmanian Aboriginal people, like cultures everywhere, expressed their perception of the world around them, and their relationship with these phenomena through visual languages. Hand stencils, made by bodily imposition on the material world to create an unambiguous marker of presence and being are known from most continents.<sup>92</sup> With Aboriginal people having occupied Tasmania for at least 35,000 years<sup>93</sup> and possibly up to 42,000 years,<sup>94</sup> it is not surprising that this art form is found widely distributed across the island; in Pleistocene cave sites in inland valleys, and Holocene rock shelters concentrated in coastal areas of the southern part of the island (fig. 4). Steve Brown describes the presence of hand stencils linking Tasmanian Aborigines to similar traditions across the continent,

Use of the hand stencil in southern Tasmania may have resulted from local independent invention or, I think more likely, may represent part of the colonizing groups' 'cultural baggage'. (There are) undated hand stencils in carbonate rock caves on the Nullabor Plain and in the extreme south-west of Australia as well as hand prints tentatively dated as Pleistocene in sandstone

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<sup>92</sup> Goran Burenhult (ed.), *The First Humans: Human Origins and History to 10,000bc* (The Illustrated History of Humankind, 1: American Museum of Natural History, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> Richard Cosgrove, 'Thirty Thousand Years of Human Colonization in Tasmania: New Pleistocene Dates', *Science*, 243/4899 (1989).

<sup>94</sup> Rob Paton, 'Draft Final Archaeological Report on the Test Excavations of the Lower Jordan River Levee Site', (Sandy Bay, Tas.: DPIWE, 2010).

rock shelters in Arnhem Land (which) may, with those of southern Tasmania, represent a widespread Australian late Pleistocene art tradition.<sup>95</sup>

The appearance of similar artwork across Asia, the Americas, Europe and Africa attest to even older linkages. Tasmanian Aboriginal people today take an active interest in the conservation and protection of hand stencil sites, considering them, along with burial sites, to be amongst the most sensitive and culturally significant heritage places on the island. Hand stencils are considered to be markers relating to locations of ceremonial significance, that tell of an individual's cultural identity and its relationship to a particular place, and also signal the occurrence of rites of passage in the lives of Aboriginal people.

Mention of Tasmanian hand stencils in European literature was first made by James Bonwick in 1870.<sup>96</sup> However, it was not until 1958 that a scientific description was published.<sup>97</sup> Descriptions of another important Aboriginal visual system of communication through the creation of petroglyphs in Tasmania had appeared a little earlier with Archibald Meston's survey published in 1933.<sup>98</sup> At that time only three locations, at Mt Cameron West, Trial Harbour and Devonport, were known to non-Aboriginal people. By 1950, museums in Tasmania had begun collecting examples of this work, with the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston participating in the removal of large sections of stone from the Mt Cameron West site by 1950 (fig. 5).<sup>99</sup> The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart removed further sections of rock from Mt Cameron for its collection in 1951. Both actions were justified on the basis that damage to the carvings from natural erosion and weathering was causing noticeable deterioration over the period since they had been first recorded.

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<sup>95</sup> Steve Brown, 'Art and Tasmanian Prehistory: Evidence for Changing Cultural Traditions in a Changing Environment', in P. Bahn and A. Rosenfeld (eds.), *Rock Art and Prehistory: Papers Presented to Symposium G of the Aura Congress, Darwin 1988* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1991).

<sup>96</sup> Bonwick, *The Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians*.

<sup>97</sup> S De Tega and W. Bryden, 'A Note on Tasmanian Aboriginal Drawings', *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 92 (1958).

<sup>98</sup> Archibald Meston, 'Aboriginal Rock-Carvings in Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, Part II (1933).

<sup>99</sup> L. E. Luckman, 'The Aboriginal Rock Carvings at Mt Cameron West, Tasmania, Photographs and Notes on Excavations', *ibid.* (1950).



Figure 5 - Rock carving at Mt Cameron West (Preminghana), TMAG.

Since the time of Meston's survey, Tasmanian Aboriginal rock art has been recorded in most regions.<sup>100</sup> Significant variation in regional styles has become apparent, ranging from the geometric patterns typical of Mount Cameron, to arrays of 'cupules' at Bond Bay (fig. 6) on the southwest coast.<sup>101</sup> At the time, European archaeologists were mystified by the nature of these arrays. Since then, this form of rock art has been noted in the Kimberley region of northwestern Australia, and as far away as Stjordal, Norway.<sup>102</sup>

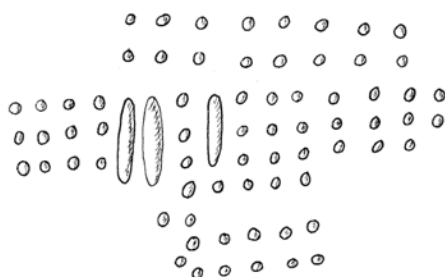


Figure 6 - Unknown Artist(s). *Tasmanian Rock Carving, Bond Bay*, from Reid, 1954.

<sup>100</sup> Peter C. Sims, 'No Reprieve for Tasmanian Rock Art', *Arts*, 2 (2013); Brown, 'Art and Tasmanian Prehistory: Evidence for Changing Cultural Traditions in a Changing Environment'.

<sup>101</sup> First published by Owen Reid, 'Additional Discoveries of Aboriginal Rock Carvings in Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 88 (1954).

<sup>102</sup> See Flood, *Rock Art of the Dreamtime: Images of Ancient Australia*; Peter C. Sims, 'Variations in Tasmanian Petroglyphs', in Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (ed.), (Canberra, 1977), 429-38.

Little art-historical or cultural consideration of the meaning of these artworks has been made to date, especially of their place alongside European representations of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture. While outside the scope of this study, the subject beckons as a valuable subject for further research.<sup>103</sup>

Bonwick published facsimiles of ‘some rude Tasmanian sketches of men and animals, with five drawings, as seen by Mr. Commissary Browne, on a tree, representing the sun, moon, some snakes and five persons in a boat’ (fig. 7).<sup>104</sup> This form of Aboriginal self-representation demonstrated its relevance to the evolution of graphic communication in the colony when it was recognized by Surveyor General George Frankland as a potential mode of cross-cultural communication. This was subsequently utilized by Governor Arthur in the design of ‘Proclamation Boards’ in 1829 (see Chapter 4), aimed at attempting to assure Aborigines of the prospect of equal treatment by the colonial judicial system at a time when intense conflict had broken out between settlers and Aborigines.



Figure 7 - Unknown artist(s), *Some rude Tasmanian Sketches*, from Bonwick, 1870.

The first visual record of Tasmanian Aboriginal artwork in Tasmania was made by Charles Alexandre Lesueur (1788-1846). Lesueur was a natural history artist sailing with Nicolas Baudin (1754-1803) when he visited Maria Island, off the east coast of Tasmania in February 1802. A series of drawings on bark positioned outside an Aboriginal tomb were drawn by the naturalist (fig. 9), but little attempt seems to have been made by the French to try to determine their meaning. Observations of the tomb

<sup>103</sup> References by Robinson to pictograms referring to the sun and moon also point to astronomical knowledge of Tasmanian Aborigines. See Gough, 'History, Representation, Globalisation and Indigenous Cultures: A Tasmanian Perspective'.

<sup>104</sup> Bonwick, *The Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians*. p. 47.

recorded in journals of several members of the crew suggest that the pieces of bark depicted in Lesueur's drawing were disturbed in gaining access the tomb and subsequently positioned outside in order to demonstrate these intricate designs in the drawing. The botanist Jean-Baptiste Lechenault de La Tour (1773-1826) refers in his journal to removing these strips of bark from a mound containing ashes and bones. Lechenault wrote,

what I had taken for a shelter was a carefully arranged mass of bark, covering a hemispherical mound. Turning over these pieces of bark, I noticed that they were covered with lines deliberately made, which resembled in form the tattooing of these people.<sup>105</sup>

François Péron, the zoologist on board, examined another tomb found on the island and found similar drawings on bark. He too suggested a relationship, between the characters traced on the bark and those which were seen incised on the upper part of the arms of several of the natives as cicatrices. These designs were recorded by another of the expedition's artists, Nicolas-Martin Petit (fig. 8).<sup>106</sup>

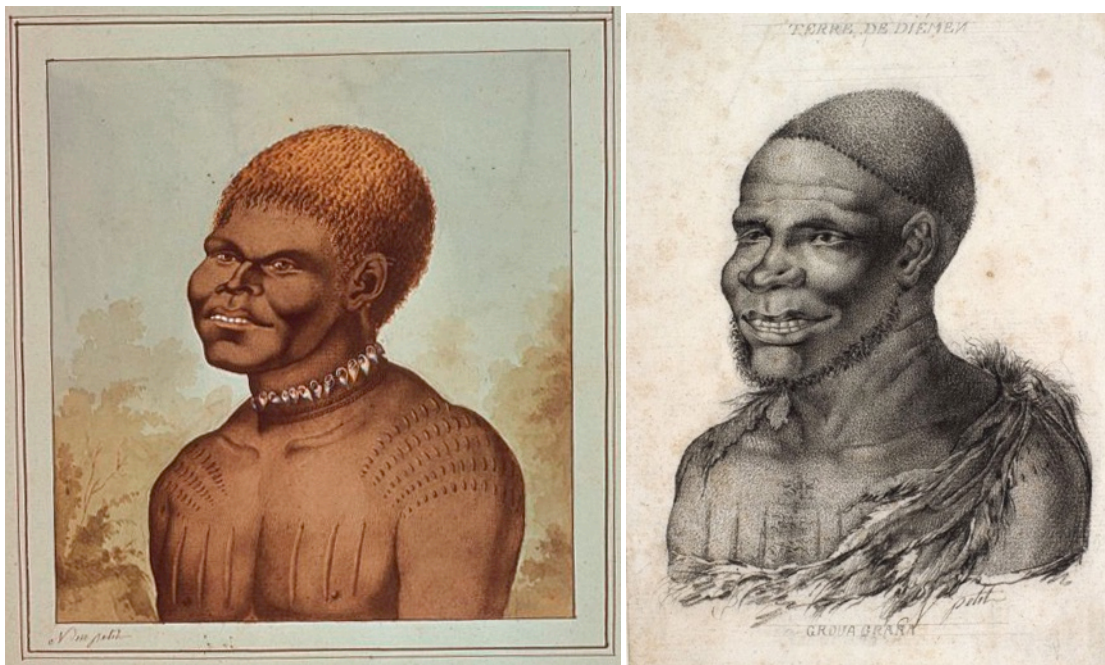


Figure 8 - Nicolas-Martin Petit, *Bara-Ourou* (left); *Homme de Tasmanie appelé Grouagrara*, (right), 1802, drawings, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre.

<sup>105</sup> Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines*, 1802. p. 138

<sup>106</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 92.

Leschenault went on to describe this decoration of the skin more carefully,

They were not tattooed, but all were covered with scars deliberately made. By taking certain precautions (that is, by reopening the lips of the wound when they are about to close) they make these scars stand out sometimes about half an inch. The parts of the body they scar in this way are principally the shoulders, the shoulder blades, the back (region of kidneys), the buttocks, stomach and chest. The scars form straight, circular and semicircular lines.<sup>107</sup>

The descriptions of the drawings in each tomb are not sufficiently detailed to determine how they might have differed from each other. However, an entry in the journal of Jacques Hamelin, Master of the *Naturaliste*, which accompanied the *Le Géographe* on Baudin's voyage, provides an important description of differences between the two tombs. Hamelin records, 'on Maria Island (we) saw a second tomb. On the grass which covered the ashes there were eight sticks, as on the first tomb, but instead of being parallel, they were crossed.'<sup>108</sup> This provides a useful key to understanding the accuracy of description contained in Lesueur's drawing of these ceremonial structures (fig. 9).

Based on these descriptions it is possible to conclude that Lesueur created a compound image to show both tombs that were found on Maria Island in one drawing. This can be deduced by noting that two mounds are depicted – one within the structure of a tomb, the other positioned alongside it, but exposed to show the difference that was noted in the arrangement of sticks. Taking such liberties in the arrangement a composition was not unusual for the naturalists, who made many drawings on the voyage grouping botanical and zoological examples together for comparative purposes. To do this with ethnographic objects in a landscape scene simply served the same purpose. If we can be confident that the distinct stick arrangements are shown in the same drawing to describe differences in decoration of the mounds, then it can be assumed with a degree of certainty that the artist has done

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

the same thing with the two strips of bark positioned in the foreground of the drawing. If this is the case, then it is likely that the symbols on each piece of bark correspond to separate tombs as well.

There can be little doubt that Lesueur was intent on creating an accurate visual description of the items he included in his drawings. He created at least two drawings of the tombs. These differ slightly in composition, but each show the two cremation mounds in a similar way, as well as the two strips of inscribed bark. The better-known engraving of the scene, published as Plate 12 in the *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes*<sup>109</sup> might be assumed to be less useful in this regard, as the composition has been modified by combining features of both drawings, and the addition of a figure kneeling beside the exposed mound, which is shown to have been broken open, as Péron describes in the accompanying text of his journal. However, while some elements of the composition vary between both sketches and the engraving, the detail of the bark drawings remains preserved, presumably under the instruction of Péron, who wished to maintain the ethnographic integrity of the Aboriginal artworks.

What the symbols recorded by Lesueur represent is not clear. However, sufficient records exist to establish that some of these designs relate to astronomical associations, and that designs were specific to geographic location of social groups. George Augustus Robinson noted, ‘most of the eastern natives had the form of the moon cut in their flesh. This mark seems peculiar to them, and they count by the moon.’<sup>110</sup> He adds,

The Aboriginal females on the islands have round circles cut in their flesh in imitation of the sun or the moon. Some are much larger than this outline (a circle of about 1<sup>1/2</sup> inch diameter with a thick margin, its area covered with a number of short transverse lines or dashes). I have seen a woman with four of

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<sup>109</sup> A translation of the second edition of Péron’s atlas was published in 2006. See François Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands* (Cornell, Christine edn.; Adelaide: The Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834 / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley*. p. 263.



them on her body others I have seen with two or three. They are very fond of them, are generally placed on each side of the backbone and about the hips.<sup>111</sup>

Robinson also comments on the Aboriginal women's body decoration on the west coast, 'all their females had three scars or cicatrices on the back of each leg, about the middle of the calf, which is peculiar to themselves.'<sup>112</sup>



Figure 9 - Charles Alexandre Lesueur, *Tombeaux des naturels de l'île Maria, Terre de Diémen (Tasmanie)*, 1804, (details), engraving after Lesueur by Marie-Alexandre Duparc and Victor Pillement, NGV (top); pencil drawing and ink drawing, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre (bottom).

Given the strong bodily associations of the designs found on the bark sheets covering the cremation mounds encountered by the French, is possible that these were fragments of a visual narrative, drawn carefully on the inside of the tomb of each of the deceased individuals, telling stories related to their cultural identities, the

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. pp. 581-82.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 143.

experiences of their lives, and even their tribal and geographical affiliations.<sup>113</sup> If the French opinions are correct, and the designs drawn on the bark strips with charcoal emulated similar designs tattooed onto the bodies of the Aboriginal people living in the area, then they may be more intimate than a simple obituary story – they might constitute an indigenous form of funereal portrait – in parallel with designs used to decorate *pukamani* poles of the Tiwi Islands in Northern Australia.<sup>114</sup>

The European portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines by Petit detailing body scarring (fig. 8) also provide an insight into other forms of visual self-expression by Tasmanian Aborigines. *Bara-Orou* is shown wearing a necklace made by stringing together polished shells of *Phasianotrochus eximius*, or King Maireeners.<sup>115</sup> Tasmanian Aborigines wore a range of body adornments, including necklaces made from strips of animal hide, sometimes tied with the bones of animals, or deceased family members. These were often coated with coloured ochre and charcoal, which were also used to colour the skin and applied to the hair in combination with animal fat. The drawing of *Bara-Orou* clearly illustrates this form of hair decoration. Leschenault offers some curious interpretation in his journal,

There was one among them, a young man, who had coloured his hair with ochre-coloured earth. His hair was divided into small separate locks, and from a distance resembled the red oiled wigs that the French ladies wore a few years ago. (I apologise to the fair sex, whose charms enhance every one of their fashions, for comparing them with the dirty hair dressing of these savages, but the resemblance is so striking and I could not think of a more apt description.)<sup>116</sup>

Another distinctive hairstyle is illustrated in the drawing of the unidentified Aboriginal man (also at fig. 8), who can be seen to have his head shaved into a number of concentric rings and to have a carefully shaped beard. Several journal entries draw comparisons between this style of hair and the tonsure of Christian

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<sup>113</sup> For a detailed discussion of cicatrizing among Tasmanian Aborigines, see Brian Plomley, 'The Tasmanian Tribes & Cicatrices as Tribal Indicators among the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Occasional Paper* (5; Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1992).

<sup>114</sup> See Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003). pp. 85-89.

<sup>115</sup> Shell type identified by Julie Gough, pers. comm.

<sup>116</sup> Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*. pp. 130-31.

monks. However, it seems from the tone of these entries that neither this, nor the comparison with 'French ladies' was made to compliment, but rather as an ironic observation meant to emphasise distinctions between civilized Europeans and rude savages.

### *The Invention of Savagery*

The idea of savagery permeates the literature on indigenous peoples, from the beginnings of imperial European global expansion, through to twentieth-century art and colonial histories. It is common in histories of colonial Tasmania to ascribe ideas of noble savagery to the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), and in particular, his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (*Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*) (1758). References to this idea of the noble savage are frequent and too often simplistic. As a result, use of the term by important scholars of Tasmanian Aboriginal history and visual representation<sup>117</sup> is generalized and fails to engage with the depth and complexity of the notion.

In this project, I consider the idea of the noble savage as a folk tale and observe, as did Vladimir Propp in his examination of Russian folk tales, that most references to it are 'of an informational rather than an investigatory nature.'<sup>118</sup> Propp's response was to develop a scientific methodology to identify sources, themes and morphologies across folk tales in order to more precisely investigate their function and how meanings are derived as tales travel through time. More complete analyses of the origins and deployment of the trope are available,<sup>119</sup> and a thorough investigation of the appearance of the noble savage in art and literature relating to Tasmania is beyond

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<sup>117</sup> See, for example, Rhys Jones, 'Images of Natural Man', in Jacqueline Bonnemains, Elliott Forsyth, and Bernard Smith (eds.), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988); Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*; Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*; Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars*.

<sup>118</sup> Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*. p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> See, for example McGregor, *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden: Notes toward a Syntactics of Place*; Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*; Robert Williams, *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilisation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

the scope of this project. However, it is useful to briefly examine some aspects of the evolution of the idea of the savage in the Western mind to identify some key themes and to trace these to several important sources. By more critically examining such facets of the idea of the savage, it can be seen how this trope has influenced European representations of Tasmanian Aborigines. More importantly, the complex dimensions of this trope also flag aspects of savagery that serve to reflect European fears and aspirations of their own social, cultural, and individual qualities; and blindness to their own roles in bringing forth behaviours in indigenous peoples that confirmed their worst fears.

Ever since Europeans ventured beyond the Pillars of Hercules to the west, or the Gates of Alexander to the east, rich literary and visual traditions have grown to describe what lay beyond. The beginnings of this process blended folklore with fantasy. Observation-based information was rare, or short-lived. Where it existed, the passage of fact through generations of oral history shifted its value from documentation to performance and allegory. The earliest, and most enduring examples of this in the Western canon are undoubtedly the epic Greek poems attributed to Homer, although these are likely to have been influenced by even earlier Mesopotamian traditions.<sup>120</sup>

Beyond the frontier were reputed to live primitive and barbarous tribes, but also regions of immense, fantastical wealth. It was through imagining such places and people, and experiencing the first, tentative encounters with human cultures outside of the medieval Christian imagination, that Europe began to form ideas of its own distinctiveness. As Christopher Pinney points out, 'Europe was always a reflection of other times and places, never a self-present unity awaiting its replicatory colonial enunciation.'<sup>121</sup> The idea of Europe might be said to have emerged to describe a place surrounded by savages.

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<sup>120</sup> Martin West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>121</sup> Christopher Pinney, 'Creole Europe: The Reflection of a Reflection', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 20 (2003). pp. 127-28.

One of the earliest references to noble savagery in Tasmanian popular history was made in 1852 by James West, who introduced his *History of Tasmania* with reference to the writings of naturalists such as Jacques-Julien Houtou de Labillardière (1755 - 1834) who,

left Europe when the dreams of Rousseau were the toys of the speculative... in his work, the Tasmanian Blacks appear in the most charming simplicity, harmless and content; an extraordinary remnant of primitive innocence.<sup>122</sup>

This popular perspective has strongly influenced twentieth-century reception of French and British depictions of Tasmanian Aborigines, obscuring a more complex context for the production of these representations and their rich iconography. Importantly, the term ‘noble savage’ did not originate with Rousseau, but was first popularized in English by the poet and playwright John Dryden (1631-1700), in his play, *Conquest of Granada*.<sup>123</sup> This was an archetypal English heroic drama celebrating the Spanish conquest of Islamic Iberia; *Conquest* was not concerned with primitive innocence, but heroic figures and actions. The hero, Almanz, fights for the Moors, and asserts his heroism through association with the freedom and wilds of nature, and opposition to the rule of state,

Almanz: No man has more contempt than I, of breath;  
But whence hast thou the right to give me death?  
Obey'd as Sovereign by thy Subjects be,  
But know, that I alone am King of me.  
I am as free as Nature first made man  
'Ere the base Laws of Servitude began  
When wild in woods the noble Savage ran.<sup>124</sup>

Dryden bases his heroes in the first part on Homer's *Achilles* - ‘who in strength and courage surpass'd all the rest of the Grecian Army’. With emphasis on the

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<sup>122</sup> West, *The History of Tasmania*. p. 3.

<sup>123</sup> John Dryden, *Almanzor and Almahide, or, the Conquest of Granada the Second Part. As It Is Acted at the Theater-Royal*. (New Exchange, London: Henry Herringman, 1672).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

tempestuous and insolent nature of Achilles' character 'withall, of so fiery a temper, so impatient of an injury, even from his King', Almanzor is also a romantic hero.<sup>125</sup> This is the progenitor of the noble savage in English literature, heroic and outside of civil rule; 'Almanzor does all things: or if you will have an absurd accusation, in their nonsense who make it, that he performs impossibilities.'<sup>126</sup>

Importantly, Dryden's noble savage was unrelated to the hard savagery described by Rousseau as,

primitive humanity's desparate mode of existence: 'Solitary, indolent, and perpetually accompanied by danger,' primitive humans, Rousseau explains, wander 'up and down the forests... without speech, and without home, an equal stranger to war and to all ties.' Humanity in this primitive condition, as he observes it, is without morals, virtues, or vices. There is nothing noble about it.<sup>127</sup>

Robert Williams instead points to an 'intermediate' stage of human progress described in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, as the source of the commonly understood conception of the noble savage. This, he argues, is adopted by Rousseau from language associated with the Greek Legend of the Golden Age. The Greek poet Hesiod (ca. 700BC) is credited (at least in terms of the archaeology of Western literary traditions) with the invention of a Golden Age of Mankind. In his *Works and Days*, he retells,

the famous Greek legend of the Golden Age at the beginning of time, when humans lived a far more simple and virtuous existence, blessed by the gods, sustained by bounteous gifts of untamed wild nature, without the benefits and burdens of civilised life...<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). p. 14.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>127</sup> Williams, *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilisation*. p. 198.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

Written around the time of Homer's epics, *Works and Days* documented the activities of warrior-heroes invading distant, savage lands. According to Williams, Hesiod's ode is, 'the first great poetical indictment against human misery and despair',<sup>129</sup> a critique of colonialism and the consequences for those living outside the polis. Hesiod's was an era of increasing population, and the proliferation of as many as fifteen hundred Greek settlements across the Mediterranean, reaching as far as Marseilles in France, Cyrene in North Africa and the Costa Brava in Spain.

This period saw the Greeks, according to Perry Andersen, developing into 'the Western world's first inherently colonial form of civilisation... focussed on acquiring new territories and lands for settlement of excess populations and expanding their trading networks.'<sup>130</sup> Local tribes were simply driven away from the heavily fortified settlements and were of little concern to the rulers. In effect, this mode of expansion was the realization of Homer's tales of the imposition of higher law in savage lands. Hesiod's writing instead presented the perspective of those existing outside the aristocracy – farm labourers, the poor and dispossessed, whose experience of Greek success was to endure war, feuds and eviction. These are the Arcadians, so celebrated in Renaissance art; symbolising a pure, idyllic rural life.

For protest-minded Greeks, *Works and Days* questioned the value of urbanised forms of civilisation and asked whether a simpler life, lived closer to nature, might have offered a better life. For Hesiod, life in the Golden Age was noble, virtuous and natural. The first humans of the Golden Age,

... took their pleasure in festivals, and lived without troubles.  
When they died, it was as if they fell asleep. All goods were theirs.  
The fruitful grainland yielded its harvest to them of its own accord;  
this was great and abundant, while they at their pleasure  
quietly looked after their works, in the midst of good things.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Perry Andersen, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: Verso, 1974). p. 28.

<sup>131</sup> Hesiod, *The Works and Days, Theogony, the Shield of Herakles*, trans. Richard Lattimore (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1959).





Figure 10 - Nicolas Poussin, *Et in Arcadia ego*, 1639, oil on canvas, Le Louvre, Paris.

Ideas of Arcadian life were epitomised in seventeenth-century French art by Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665). His painting *Et in Arcadia ego* (fig. 10) shows a group of shepherds gathered around a tomb. It is a pastoral scene from the Golden Age, in which even those living a simple utopian life, must contend with the presence of death.<sup>132</sup> In this *memento mori*, the artist draws the beholder into his allegorical scene, enabling close identification with the shepherds' life, and reminding the viewer that even those enjoying an Arcadian existence must endure the curse of mortality. Poussin's work was immensely influential in France, and had a major impact on Rousseau, who was deeply moved by the artist's depiction of suffering in nature.<sup>133</sup>

Hesiod too contrasts the apparent perfection of a pastoral life with accounts of succeeding epochs, including the Age of Heroes who fought in the Trojan Wars. Despite the appearance of progress in Greek life, the poet laments its increasing distance from the virtuous life of the Golden Age. Warfare is commonplace, as city

<sup>132</sup> Erwin Panofsky and Gerda Panofski, 'The Tomb in Arcady at the Fin-De-Siècle', in Angela Dreßen and Susanne Gramatz (eds.), *Erwin Panofsky: die späten Jahre* (4, 2011).

<sup>133</sup> This specifically refers to Rousseau's experience of Poussin's *Deluge*, but is also relevant to the treatment of a 'natural life' in *Et in Arcadia ego*, with its treatment of the sublime terror of impending mortality. See Maurice Cranston, *Jean-Jacques: The Early Life and Work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1754* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).



attacks city and the gods 'send anxieties to trouble us (there being) no favour for the man who keeps his oath, for the righteous and the good'.<sup>134</sup> According to Williams, Hesiod counterpoints the depiction of the fierce tribal savages of the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* who, in Homer, stand in the way of advancement, with a utopic vision of a people free of the need for technology, the complex tools of war, and the corruption and moral decline of contemporary Greek civilisation. He points to Hesiod's work as,

the founding textual source for one of Western Civilisation's most familiar and influential adaptations of the idea of the savage. Virtually all of the familiar stereotypes, metaphors, markers, and images associated with the theme of the noble savage in the storytelling traditions of the West can be traced back directly to *Works and Days*.<sup>135</sup>

Rousseau is often associated with the idea that a return to the primitive lifestyle of the Noble Savage would be an antidote to the inequality that plagued society in pre-revolutionary France. However, as Williams also points out, Rousseau drew his impressions from accounts of primitive tribal people that were being disseminated throughout Europe in the eighteenth-century following the return of explorers,

nakedness, odd sexual behaviors, and the usual list of exotic customs and manners top Rousseau's list as primary identifying marks of the lowest form of savagery.<sup>136</sup>

Rousseau was making the point that a hard, primitive way of life represented the lowest stage of human development. He used mostly inaccurate and stereotypical references to American Indians as primitive hunter-gatherers with access to no higher technology than stone tools to illustrate this. For Rousseau, these were not presented as an ideal, but as an example of savagery that revealed true human nature, which he believed to be perfectable. Williams points out that Rousseau, 'recognized that once

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<sup>134</sup> Hesiod, *The Works and Days, Theogony, the Shield of Herakles*.

<sup>135</sup> Williams, *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilisation*. p. 39.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*. p. 201.

the institution of property had been introduced, returning to a state of nature was impossible for humanity.’<sup>137</sup>

Having touched on both Rousseau and Dryden’s treatment of the idea of the noble savage, it can be seen that the emerging themes of romantic heroism and courage correspond poorly with the popular conception of the term in the Tasmanian context. The purview of colonization also disallowed the idea of natural freedom. To develop a more complete picture of the noble savage, it is necessary to look to more immediate precedents in European colonial history.



Figure 11 - Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, *Homme Acadien*, 1796-1804, engraving by J. Laroque, National Archives of Canada.

Marc Lescarbot (1570–1641) was a French lawyer and author who, according to Felipe Fernandez Armesto, described the ‘original noble savage’, an un-named Mi’kmaq Indian.<sup>138</sup> Lescarbot published *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* on his return to France in 1609; a compendium of several voyages, including Lescarbot’s own, which included an ethnography of Indians. An excerpted English translation of

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). p. 328.

Lescarbot's voyage and ethnography, *Nova Francia*, appeared the following year. This, according to Ter Ellingson, marked the entry of the noble savage into English literature.<sup>139</sup> Lescarbot wrote of the Mi'kmaq in order to contrast them with the savage cannibals that had been reported to exist in South America by earlier navigators,

Now leaving there those *Anthropophages* Brazilians, let us return to our New France, where the Men there are more humane, and live with that which God hath given Man, not devouring their like. Also we must say of them that they are truly noble, not having any action but is generous, whether we consider their hunting, or their employment in the wars, or that one search out their domestical actions, wherein the women do exercise themselves, in that which is proper unto them, and the men in that which belongeth to arms, and other things befitting them... But here one must consider that for the most part of the world have lived so from the beginning, and by degrees, men have been civilized, when that they have assembled themselves for to live under certain laws, rule and policy.<sup>140</sup>

Mi'kmaq lifestyle was carefully described by Lescarbot as a natural progenitor of civilized society and was, according to Ellingson, a clear source for Dryden's characterization of Almanaz. He points to the chapter headings in both French and English versions of Lescarbot's Contents ('The Savages are truly Noble/*Les Sauvages sont vraiment nobles*') to emphasise the explicit importance attached to this classification by the author. For Lescarbot, the term did not simply signify a romantic or lyrical notion.

Ellingson observes that discussion of native nobility occurs in the section of Lescarbot's ethnography dealing with hunting. While primarily a subsistence practice for Native Americans,

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<sup>139</sup> Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 21-22.

by their free-practice of hunting, which is also an ‘image of war’, and defense of the innocent, the ‘savages’ of America occupy a status that corresponds, from a legal standpoint, to the nobility of Europe... By exercising a ‘heavenly privilege’ reserved in Europe for nobility, they have in effect constituted for themselves as a people, rather than restricting to a privileged class, the status defined in Europe as ‘noble’.<sup>141</sup>

Ellingson argues that in a technical legal sense, which for the lawyer Lescarbot was of key significance, the conclusion that ‘the Savages are truly Noble’ was not only appropriate, but legally inescapable; establishing for the Mi’kmaq a status of ‘right of usage’. While this idea of noble sovereignty suited Dryden in establishing his hero as beyond civil rule – a man ‘who does all things’ – it is not reflected in Rousseau’s use of the term. Given Rousseau’s antipathy to the ‘heavenly privilege’ of nobility in revolutionary France, it is perhaps not surprising that Rousseau problematized this aspect of savagery in his discourse.

According to Fernandez-Armesto, the attraction of the noble savage to the French was also bound up with their military interests.

The idea of the noble savage really became rooted in Western tradition when it transferred to the Huron, who lived southwest of the Micmac on... the banks of the Great Lakes. Unlike other Iroquoian-speaking peoples, the Huron welcomed the French, because they needed allies in their perpetual wars against their neighbours.<sup>142</sup>

The Huron were also tolerant of Christianity,

Franciscans and Jesuits alike praised them as embodiments of natural wisdom, crediting them with skills in artisanship, building, canoe-craft and farming; and

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. pp. 23-24.

<sup>142</sup> Fernandez-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*. p. 328.

with moral superiority: kindness to strangers and to each other, and a bias towards peace with outsiders and equality among themselves.<sup>143</sup>

Fernandez-Armesto suggests that, with the virtual disappearance of the Huron in New France due to decimation in wars that the French facilitated, and the impact of introduced diseases, an 'idealized Huron' was all that soon remained for French philosophers to promote. The Huron figure as a 'child of nature' is then appropriated by French writers including Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce de Lahontan (1666-1716), who had returned to France after leading numerous offenses against the Iroquois. De Lahontan invented a Huron interlocutor named 'Adario' in his *Supplément aux Voyages ou Dialogues avec le sauvage Adario* (1703), using this character's native sense of justice and freedom to lambast Christianity and French law.<sup>144</sup> A Huron character is also deployed by François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) or Voltaire, in his satirical novel *L'ingénu* (fig. 12).



Figure 12 - Bernard Naudin, *Illustration por l'Ingénu de Voltaire*, 1767, engraving, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> David M. Hayne, 'Louis-Armand De Lom D'arce De Lahontan', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (2: University of Toronto, 2003).

These fictionalized critiques of French society developed at the same time as French literary circles became increasingly interested in travel writing. The writings of Charles-Louis de Secondat (1689-1775) or Montesquieu and, in particular, his interest in cultural relativity influenced Voltaire,

Montesquieu showed that what may seem bizarre in other cultures results in fact from the same processes that produce one's own culture. Cultural differences can be retraced along a logical chain to the diversity of fundamental factors such as geography, climate, history and demography.<sup>145</sup>

For Voltaire, according to Hollier, the Huron was 'little more than a blank whose principle function in the text was to represent the unproblematic 'natural man'. In this way, Voltaire sought to penetrate cultural particularity to reach the rational norm that defines the way things should be. Voltaire wrote of the Huron as a 'child of nature' who,

having learned nothing (of sciences) in his infancy, he had not imbibed any prejudices. His mind, not having been warped by error, had retained all its primitive rectitude. He saw things as they were; whereas the ideas that are communicated to us in our infancy make us see them all our life in a false light.<sup>146</sup>

When French and British navigators and artists arrived in Van Diemen's Land, the noble savages that they depicted were more complex representations than those usually referred to in popular histories. These depictions carried a rich cultural and literary heritage, with a wide pallet of thematic aspects or variations of noble savagery from which to choose. The Tasmanian Aborigines could be seen as heroic and beyond servitude to civil rule and all its corrupting influences (especially property), a reflection of French disillusion with institutional power and the corruption of society by injustice. They also symbolized a heroic and untamed nobility with sovereign rights to nature, leading a virtuous existence beyond colonial rule. They could be a

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<sup>145</sup> Denis Hollier, *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). p. 412.

<sup>146</sup> Voltaire, 'L'ingénu', *Classic Tales: With Critical Essays on the Merits and Reputations of the Authors* (2; London: John Hunt & Carew Reynell, 1807). pp. 248-49.

tempestuous military ally, a source of natural reason, a reminder of the diversity of humanity, or a naïve child of nature. They could be a remnant of the Golden Age and, through mortality in common with the civilised European, offer hope of a return to lost freedoms. Alongside all of this, they could also represent a disparate and primitive hard savagery from which Europeans could reassuringly distinguish themselves.

As we will see later in this chapter, and throughout this thesis, Tasmanian Aborigines were seen to manifest most of these themes of noble savagery at one time or another, constituting an unstable presence in European perception for as long as they were denied the sort of agency that was assumed as a defining quality of European superiority.

### *Exploration*

The desire to extend the power and reach of empire by acquiring new lands inevitably brought Europeans into contact with peoples and cultures that were unfamiliar and challenged their conceptions of history. All of these encounters were characterized by creative, and often awkward efforts to find a place for the inhabitants of strange lands in the already-established grand narratives that underpinned imperial claims to authority.

However, this is not a process that began with the voyages of exploration in the seventeenth or eighteenth-century. While records of achievement by great Portuguese navigators such as Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus are etched in the popular imagination, the impetus that took them south along the African coast to eventually round the Cape of Good Hope had already been established for two centuries. These motivations were principally concerned, not with the expansion of knowledge that characterized the Enlightenment voyages of discovery in the nineteenth-century, but with the prime movers of religion and conquest in the search for wealth.

Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) of Portugal was the first western European to systematically challenge the southern boundary of the known universe, then co-

incident with the equatorial zone. Beyond Cape Bojador, it was thought, ‘the sun was so hot that the sea boiled and, legend had it, white men were turned into blacks’.<sup>147</sup> Henry sent ships on multiple quests; to obtain riches, and to propagate his Christian faith. Following the 1415 conquest of Ceuta, a Muslim stronghold across the Strait of Gibraltar on the coast of Morocco, Portugal had invested heavily in finding a sea route to the spice-rich Indies. The cost of this was underwritten by a series of Papal Bulls, endorsing Portugal’s plans to open up new realms to the Catholic faith and providing the authority for conquest. Thus began Europe’s expansion for the purposes of trade and economic growth, firmly predicated on the allegiance or subjugation of those peoples encountered in the process.

According to Matthew Richardson, the last of these Papal authorisations, *Inter Caetera* (1493), ‘explicitly authorised the king to subjugate and convert the infidels and heathens from Cape Bojador to India.’<sup>148</sup> Prior to reaching the Indian Ocean, which gave access to the port of Calicut in Southern India, finance for this exploration was generated not by trade in spices, but in slaves. One hundred and fifty years before, Niccolo and Maffeo Polo had returned to Venice following a fifteen-year journey that had taken them to the Beijing court of Kublai Khan. The desire by the great Khan to receive instruction in Christian faith and Western knowledge of the arts bolstered Papal belief in the universal primacy of Christian faith. The brothers returned in 1271 along with Niccolo’s son Marco, their journey laying the foundations for Marco Polo’s influential memoir, written by Rustichello da Pisa, *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* or, as commonly called in English, *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

Marco Polo’s travels along the Silk Road commenced at the spice-trading centre of Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. His *Travels* excited the Western courts with the prospect of obtaining direct access to such commodities and confirmed their arrogant belief in the inevitability of Christian hegemony. Rustichello’s previous work incorporated romantic legends associated with the Crusades, which were coming to an end at that time, instilling a sense of religious quest and duty in his accounts of exploration.

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<sup>147</sup> Paolo Novaresio, *The Explorers* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1996). p. 47.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew Richardson, *The West and the Map of the World* (Melbourne: Miengunyah Press, 2010). p. 152.



*Travels* provided a distraction from the largely unsuccessful Crusades by offering insight into the Mongol empire. In the 1230s, the Mongols had overrun European Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary and the Balkans, and invaded eastern parts of Germany and Austria. The manuscript ‘struck a chord with the European imagination’ and was quickly translated into all major European languages and reproduced in more than 140 versions.<sup>149</sup> Marco Polo’s *Travels* was in this way influential in driving an impulse on the part of the great powers of Europe to further greatness by,

... inflam(ing) the dreams of a Europe torn by struggles between relatively insignificant and poverty stricken states. *The Travels* offered an idealized image of a centralised, strong, and well-organized power, reviving the ancient ideal of a universal power.<sup>150</sup>

In venturing beyond the immediate geographical and mythological boundaries, a veil was lifted on unknown lands imagined to be populated by monsters and barbarous hordes. Descriptions of the Mongol Court, which drew riches from the subjugated nations of the Indies, are likely to have inspired Prince Henry’s desire to create an oceanic trade route that would extend Christian imperial power, and facilitate an unprecedented flow of wealth to transform Europe. The role played by slavery in this process was significant, as it engendered ideas of Christian superiority that would become cemented over the decades following Portuguese dominance of the Indian Ocean, and Spain’s entry into Central America. Human populations encountered in Africa or the Orient were expected to be either an economic ally, or a resource.

Importantly, Marco Polo is also likely to have influenced the aspirations of Christopher Columbus, who had an annotated copy of *Travels*. This version was a Latin translation known as the Pipino version, produced under instruction from the Order of Dominicans soon after the account attracted the attention of the Church.

In making his version, Pipino greatly shortened the work and made a very substantial change in the orientation of the text he produced. No longer is it

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<sup>149</sup> Simon Gaunt, *Marco Polo’s Le Devisement Du Monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013). p. 2.

<sup>150</sup> Novaresio, *The Explorers*. p. 45.

simply a description of things seen and heard; Pipino's version is rather a document for the propagation of the Catholic faith. He suppressed items which he feared might arouse heretical curiosity, and vigorously emphasized the evils of what he considered pagan customs.<sup>151</sup>

Gaunt argues that recognising Columbus' debt to Marco Polo illustrates the extent to which medieval views of the world had a hand in structuring our own. Medieval depictions of misanthropes and monstrous races had engendered in Europeans a deep terror of the Other and their association with visions of Hell.

Medieval mechanisms of othering ... share a tendency to lump all others together as representative of a 'malignant otherness' against which a dominant Christian identity is defined according to a logic that is rigidly binary: us and them.<sup>152</sup>

This marks the beginnings of a process in the formation of European vision in which fear and terror gave way to an emboldened aspiration for the accumulation of wealth and the extension of power. Marco Polo's fabulous encounters with foreign kingdoms desirous of European knowledge reassured the West that far-flung peoples of the world were subject to human vulnerabilities, and might be controlled and exploited. Outside of these relations of wealth and power were populations who were unsuited to the establishment of trade relationships, or of inferior quality as slaves. Into this space was born the savage, an uncanny presence 'serving to collapse perpetually the familiar and the foreign into each other, so as to contain one in the other', and inflicted with Homi Bhabha's idea of 'a hybridity, a difference within, a subject that inhabits the rim of an "in between" reality.'<sup>153</sup> In such a vision, all forms of humanity were subject to the same cosmic order and could be brought under Western dominion.

As a travel writer, Marco Polo also crafted a niche for the future reader and viewer of accounts of exotic places and peoples that was seductive and engaging. According to

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<sup>151</sup> Edwin G. Beal, 'Concerning Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus', *Journal of East Asian Libraries*, 101 (1993). p. 153.

<sup>152</sup> Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement Du Monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity*. p. 38.

<sup>153</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). p. 13.

Gaunt, 'it is Marco Polo's situation of himself "in between" West and East that makes *Devisement* such a compelling text'.<sup>154</sup> In many ways, Marco Polo created the seeds of demand for the journals of navigators over the coming centuries, and especially for illustrations of exotic views of people and places. Unlike medieval illustrations, which drove Christians inwards toward the protection against the infernal horrors of the world promised by church and scripture, representations of foreign places and cultures drew the Christian imperial imagination forward and outward towards a global vision of influence.

### *In Search of the Antipodes*

While Henry the Navigator's vision was set firmly on exploiting the riches of India, the third voyage of Amerigo Vespucci (1454-1512) was directed by the Portuguese crown in 1501 to inspect the newly-discovered Tierra de Santa Cruz (Brazil), and to seek a westward passage further south. Vespucci's exploration of the southern coast of South America, as far as Patagonia, was received in Europe as the discovery of the long-anticipated Antipodes.<sup>155</sup>

First attested to in Plato's *Timaeus* (c.360 BC), a dialogue with Aristotle on the nature of the human being, the physical world, and the cosmos; 'antipodes' was initially a simple reference to the world as a sphere, with the literal translation 'under the feet, opposite side'. This paved the way for Pythagoras (c.570-c.495 BC) to provide the first suggestion of a southern continent. Crates of Mallos, in the second-century BC, then proposed that the world comprised four land masses, separated by oceans. This was the first iteration of the symmetry with which the world is still conceived in Western thought, divided into north and south, east and west. Crates also proposed that even though these continents would be inaccessible, there might be an inhabited southern world.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Gaunt, *Marco Polo's Le Devisement Du Monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity*. p. 39.

<sup>155</sup> William Lawrence Eisler, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). p. 13.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

When the idea of an antipodes appeared in the Middle Ages, and was translated into Latin, its literal sense changed to refer to inhabitants with ‘feet opposite’, spawning a superstitious bestiary of beings with not only feet turned the wrong way, but growing out of their heads, and every other imaginable monstrosity (fig 13).



Figure 13 - Hartmann Schedel, *Antipode*, 1493. Woodcut from *Liber Chronicarum*. Eisler, 1995.

These were the popular images of otherness at the time of Columbus' famous voyage in 1492. Columbus, a sugar buyer for Genoese merchants, was determined to find new islands beyond the Canaries and Azores in the hope of opening up new avenues for spice trading. He was also determined to find the rumoured continent of the Antipodes in the far Atlantic. After sailing to the Bahamas and exploring further south along the coast of Cuba to Hispaniola, Columbus returned with a group of Tainos Indians, parrots, gold and other exotic gifts for King Ferdinand of Spain. The navigator wrote in a letter to Ferdinand,

In these islands I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected, but on the contrary the whole population is very well tried, nor are they negroes as in Guinea, but their hair is flowing and they are not born where there is intense force in the rays of the sun.<sup>157</sup>

Nevertheless, it was still not clear to Columbus whether the natives he had found were human. According to Novaresio,

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<sup>157</sup> Kevin Reilly, *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader* (1; Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004). p. 566.

In his eyes, the islanders from the Bahamas and Hispaniola appeared as wonders, just as did trees, birds, flowers and other natural phenomena. He failed, or refused to recognize humanity in a society so different to his own.<sup>158</sup>

Columbus reported that the Tainos and other groups he encountered were timid and free of malice. He made frequent note of their nakedness and associated this with their presence in an earthly paradise. Fernandez-Armesto adds, 'A reader at the time would have understood that they were 'natural men', who might not possess legitimate political institutions but who might be naturally good.'<sup>159</sup> Their nakedness was interpreted, through Franciscan doctrine, as a sign of dependence on God. This, along with their human form (in comparison to the monstrosities that were expected to be found) formed the earliest iteration of the noble savage in the history of European navigation.

Columbus' discoveries were of immense interest to Pope Alexander IV, who at the time had commissioned Pinturiccio (1454–1513), to decorate the walls of his apartments with frescos. In one of these frescos, depicting Christ's resurrection, Alexander kneels in prayer before the open tomb of Christ. Immediately behind Christ's head can be seen a group of naked Tainos Indians, dancing on the hillside of an exotic landscape (fig. 14). These are the earliest European images of native Americans known to exist.<sup>160</sup> Arnold Nesselrath notes, 'the pontiff thus sought to express how he would, according to the command of Christ go into the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.'<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Novaresio, *The Explorers*. p. 80.

<sup>159</sup> Fernandez-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*. p. 167.

<sup>160</sup> The apartments were sealed off after the death of Alexander IV in 1503, as a response to his scandalous life. They were reopened in 1889. Restoration works finally revealed the figures of Tainos Indians in 2013, after they had remained unseen for 510 years. <http://www.vatican-patrons.org/canadian-patrons-help-restore-pinturicchios-borgia-apartments-3069> Accessed 23 November, 2015.

<sup>161</sup> Arnold Nesselrath, 'Points of View', in Katrin Beilmeier (ed.), *Tecumseh: Portrayals of Native Americans in Times of Treaties and Removal* (Exhibition of the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen in the Albertinum, Dresden October 1, 2013 to March 2, 2014; Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2013). p. 73.



Figure14 - Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Betto), *Resurrection*, 1492-4, fresco secco, (detail), Appartamento Borgia, Vatican.

However, the idea of a new territory, occupied by timid and peaceful children of God was short-lived. When one of his ships was wrecked, Columbus had been forced to leave the crew behind, inadvertently founding the first European settlement in the Caribbean. When he returned on his second voyage, he found that all the crew members had been killed and witnessed evidence of cannibalism. The idea of ‘natural man’, innocent of corruption, was shattered.

In Columbus’ published letter, *De Insulis Indie Iventis* of 1493, a woodcut was included showing Caribbean warriors engaging in licentious acts and anthropophagy (fig. 15). The Spanish already had authority from the Pope for conquest and the response was swift and violent. Ethnocide commenced immediately and a few decades later just a tenth of the native American population remained.<sup>162</sup> This practice inevitably continued and, with the Antipodes literally just around the corner, it was only a matter of time before violent imposition of the European quest for wealth made its way to Tasmania.

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<sup>162</sup> Novaresio, *The Explorers*. p. 80.



Figure 15 - *Caribbean Warriors, De Insulis Indie Iventis*, 1493, from Novaresio (1996).

### *Terra Australis Incognita*

Vespucci had initially sailed with one of Columbus' associates, Alonso de Ojeda. Assisted by this experience, Vespucci's fleets continued the European push south, arriving in a harbour he called Rio de Janeiro around 1502 and reaching as far south as the River Plate and Patagonia. According to William Eisler, Vespucci reached the conclusion that he was travelling around a long-fabled antipodean continent. Eisler quotes the text of Vespucci's letter to Lorenzo di Medici announcing his discovery in 1503 of a veritable paradise, peopled by archetypal noble savages,

I found myself in the region of the Antipodes... this land is very agreeable, full of tall trees which never lose their leaves and give off the sweetest odors...

Often I believe myself to be in Paradise... what can one say about the quantity of animals in the forest... I believe that there have been more species than those which disembarked from the Ark... This land is occupied by people who are entirely nude, both men and women... they have no law, nor any religion, they live according to nature ... they have no king and are subject to no-one.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Eisler, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook*. pp. 13-16.





Figure 16 - Rumbold Mercator, *America sive India Nova*, 1630, engraving, Antipodean Books, Maps and Prints.

After initial confusion amongst European cartographers about where to place Vespucci's Brazilian Antipodes, in 1531 Oronce Finé located it as a broad peninsular of a massive *Terra Australis*.<sup>164</sup> This location was still current a century later with Mercator's map of America or New India, showing *Terra Australia Nondum Cognita* as a continuity of South America and extending to New Guinea (fig. 16). This created a clear connection in the European imagination between Columbus and Vespucci's savage antipodes, and any people who might be encountered south of China and the spice-rich East Indies.

During this time, other Portuguese navigators had been making their way towards the actual Australian continent after circling around the Cape of Good Hope to India and establishing a trading base on the Malay Peninsular. Francesco Rodrigues had reached Banda, less than 1000 kilometres from the north coast of Australia in 1512, but progress further south by the Portuguese is not established. It was not until 1606 that a

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.



Dutch navigator, Willem Jansz, became the first recorded European to make landfall on what is now known as the Australian continent, sailing four hundred kilometres along the coastline of the Cape York Peninsula. Contact with Aboriginal people at the Batavia River resulted in the death of one of Jansz's crew members, confirming that the people of the northern extent of *Terra Australis* were as dangerous as those of the notional Brazilian coast.

### *Van Diemen's Land*

It was another Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman (1603-1659), who reported the first European experience of the southern limitation of Terra Australis. Tasman had been dispatched by the highly-successful Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), or Dutch East India Company, from their capital in Batavia (Jayakarta). The VOC had established control of much of the Portuguese spice trade by then, and had centres from Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean, and north to Formosa. Tasman had already explored the northern Pacific Ocean east of Japan, when he was requested by the Governor General of the VOC, Anthony van Diemen, to make his next voyage south. This expedition was motivated by the possibility of finding new resources in the lands to the south (in particular gold), as well as charting a route to Chile more direct than via Madagascar, in order to counter Spanish control of trade there. The voyage was strictly commercial, with no scientific objectives. James Backhouse Walker, in an address to the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1885, argued that what prompted the Dutch was,

Plain practical business and the hope of profit for the Company... Consequently the instructions (were) specially precise in their injunctions to enter in the journal full particulars of the productions of the countries, what sort of goods the people had for trade, and what they would take in exchange.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> James Backhouse Walker, *Abel Janszoon Tasman: His Life and Voyages, Read before the Royal Society of Tasmania on the 25th November 1895* (Hobart: William Grahame, Government Printer, 1896). p. 30.

Nevertheless, a direct reading of Tasman's instructions provides valuable insight into the influence of previous European incursions into Antipodean lands, with clear directions that the navigator should exercise caution,

In landing with small craft, extreme caution will every-where have to be used, seeing that it is well known that the southern regions are peopled by fierce savages, for which reason you will always have to be well armed and to use every prudent precaution, since experience has taught in all parts of the world that barbarian men are nowise to be trusted, because they commonly think that the foreigners who so unexpectedly appear before them have come only to seize their land, which (owing to heedlessness and over-confidence) in the discovery of America occasioned many instances of treacherous slaughter...<sup>166</sup>

Clearly these instructions were intended for the safety and preservation of the lives of the VOC crewmembers, rather than out of sympathy for native peoples. They indicate not only a caution about what might be expected of 'natural men', but an acknowledgement of the reality of their experience at the hands of Europeans. Ultimately however, it is profit that was emphasized to Tasman as the priority,

... on which account you will treat with amity and kindness such barbarian men as you shall meet and come to parley with, and connive at small affronts, thefts, and the like which they should put upon or commit against our men, lest punishments inflicted should give them a grudge against us, and by shows of kindness gain them over to us, that you may the more readily from them obtain information touching themselves, their country, and their circumstances, thus learning whether there is anything profitable to be got or effected.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Antonio Van Diemen et al., 'Instructions for; Skipper Commander Abel Jansz. Tasman, Pilot-Major Franchois Jacobsz. Visscher, and the Council of the Ship "Heemskerck" and the Flute "De Zeehaen," Destined for the Discovery and Exploration of the Unknown and Known South Land, of the South-East Coast of Nova Guinea, and of the Islands Circumjacent', in Robert McNab (ed.), *Historical Records of New Zealand* (Electronic edn., New Zealand Texts Collection, 2; Wellington, NZ: Victoria University, 1914). p. 10.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

The instructions go on to specify the gathering of (what might be called in later years) ethnographic data on the inhabitants of Terra Australis, although these too are predicated on the potential for establishing trade,

So far as time shall allow, you will diligently strive to gather information concerning the situation of their country, the fruits and cattle it produces, their methods of building houses, the appearance and shape of the inhabitants, their dress, arms, manners, diet, means of livelihood, religion, mode of government, their wars, and the like notable things, more especially whether they are kindly or cruelly disposed; showing them various specimens of the commodities you have taken with you for that purpose, so as to learn what commodities and materials are found in their country and what things they are desirous of obtaining from us in return: all which matters you will carefully note, correctly describe, and faithfully set forth in drawings, keeping for the purpose an ample and elaborate journal, in which you will set down an exact record of all that may befall you, that on your return you may be able to lay a proper report before us.

The instructions go on to direct the expedition, in the ‘unlikely’ event of encountering ‘any country peopled by civilized men’, to show them ‘greater attention’ in order to ascertain the availability of gold and silver, which was desperately needed at the time in order to address a severe imbalance of trade with Asia.<sup>168</sup> Heading south from Mauritius, Tasman failed to locate the Chilean coastline and instead turned eastward along the 40<sup>th</sup> latitude, sighting land on 24 November, 1642. The following day, while waiting for favorable weather to permit a landing, he brought his officers together for a ship’s council,

This land being the first land we have met with in the South Sea and not known to any European nation we have conferred on it the name of *Anthoony Van Diemenslandt* in honour of the Honourable Governor-General, our illustrious master, who sent us to make this discovery...<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Fernandez-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*.

<sup>169</sup> Abel Janszoon Tasman, *Abel Janszoon Tasman's Journal of His Discovery of Van Diemen's Land and New Zealand in 1642* (Facsimile edn.; Los Angeles: N. A. Kovach, 1965). p. 12.

Tasman continued sailing along the coast until on 1 December, finding a good harbour and calm weather, it was decided to land on what is now known as Tasman's Bay in Van Diemen's Land. The following morning, two boats were sent out to find water, food and timber. Tasman had been warned, following the deaths on Jansz's voyage, that the land 'was in some places inhabited by wild, cruel, black savages, by whom some of the crew were murdered.'<sup>170</sup> The advance party was therefore heavily armed, including ten musketeers, all with pikes and sidearms. Pilot-major Francoys Jacobsz and the second mate made the following report,

That they had heard certain human sounds and also sounds nearly resembling the music of a trump or a small gong not far from them though they had seen no one. That they had seen two trees about 2 or 2½ fathom in thickness measuring from 60 to 65 feet from the ground to the lowermost branches, which trees bore notches made with flint implements, the bark having been removed for the purpose; these notches, forming a kind of steps to enable persons to get up the trees and rob the birds' nests in their tops, were fully 5 feet apart so that our men concluded that the natives here must be of very tall stature, or must be in possession of some sort of artifice for getting up the said trees; in one of the trees these notched steps were so fresh and new that they seemed to have been cut less than four days ago. That on the ground they had observed certain footprints of animals, not unlike those of a tiger's claws.<sup>171</sup>

They reported finding fireplaces and piles of shells, and when they saw smoke, they decided that this was a signal from their commanders to return to ship. It can be easily imagined that these observations, together with the warnings on the reputation of native people on the Australian continent, are likely to have precipitated a hasty return to the ship.

When our men had come on board again we inquired of them whether they had been there and made a fire, to which they returned a negative answer, adding

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<sup>170</sup> Nicholas Dean Brodie, *1787: The Lost Chapters of Australia's Beginnings* (Richmond, Vic: Hardie Grant Books, 2016). p. 68.

<sup>171</sup> Tasman, *Abel Janszoon Tasman's Journal of His Discovery of Van Diemen's Land and New Zealand in 1642* p. 15.

however that at various times and points in the wood they also had seen clouds of smoke ascending. So there can be no doubt there must be men here of extraordinary stature.<sup>172</sup>

The Dutch, having not seen Tasmanian Aboriginal people directly, were clearly alarmed by the prospect of a race of giants, perhaps due to lingering notions of monstrous Antipodeans not yet relieved in their minds. As a result, no further attempt was made to land, let alone explore the vicinity. Even the obligatory raising of the flag of the Prince of Orange was carried out by the ship's carpenter, made to swim ashore,

We went to the south-east side of this bay... we carried with us a pole with the Company's mark carved into it, and a Prince-flag to be set up there, that those who shall come after us may become aware that we have been here, and have taken possession of the said land as our lawful property... We then ordered the carpenter aforesaid to swim to the shore alone with the pole and the flag... This work having been duly executed we pulled back to the ships, leaving the above-mentioned as a memorial for those who shall come after us, and for the natives of this country, who did not show themselves, though we suspect some of them were at no great distance and closely watching our proceedings.

The unwillingness of the commanders to return to shore was repeatedly blamed on high seas in Tasman's journal. Given that this was the first landfall that the small fleet of two ships had made, and with knowledge of the death of numerous Dutch sailors during similar voyages, it is not difficult to conclude that it was cautious fear that kept Tasman from making a direct record of those responsible for the evidence of occupation that they found. This is confirmed by the narrative of Hendrik Haelbos, Tasman's surgeon, who says the commander, 'from the forest heard a shrill sound from singing people. he took fright and went back on board, and saw thick smoke between the trees.'<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Duyker, *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janzoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Du Fresne, 1642 and 1772*. p. 18.

With no drawings of Tasmanian Aborigines resulting from the visit, the only visual legacy left from this 1642 encounter is a series of maps (fig. 17), detailing a broken coastline, and framing a blank hinterland canvas that would be left for later navigators to fill in.

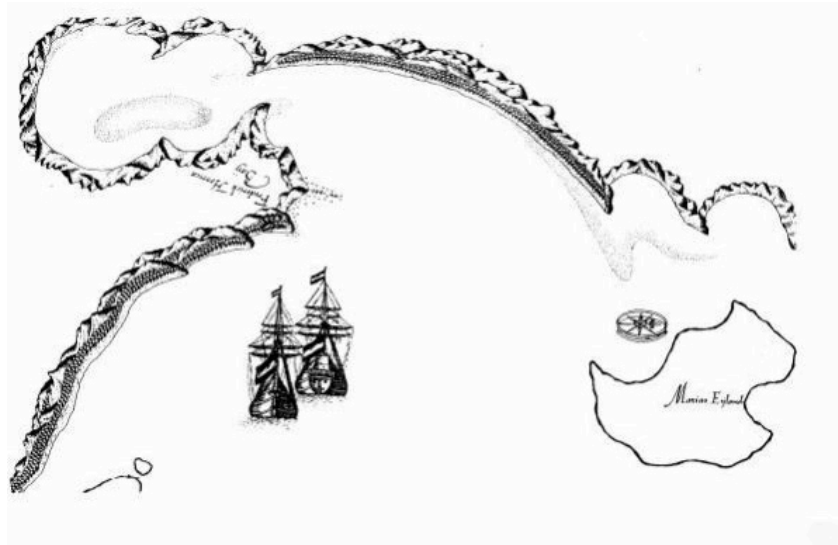


Figure 17 - Abel Janzoon Tasman, *Charts showing Fredrick Hendrix Bay with Maria Island*, 1642, from Tasman (1965).

Tasman's cautiousness was vindicated less than a month later, when he encountered Maori warriors while sailing up the coastline of New Zealand. On 19 December, the two Dutch ships were surrounded by seventeen Maori canoes and, assuming this was a friendly greeting, a cock-boat was sent out to meet them. Unknown to the Dutch they were being engaged by war canoes. The cock-boat, carrying six crew was immediately rammed and boarded, and five of the sailors were beaten to death. A drawing of the scene (fig. 18), carefully describing the circumstances of the violent encounter, was later published. This provides a putative indication of the style in which Tasmanian Aborigines might have been depicted if Tasman had lingered in Van Diemen's Land long enough to sight the Pydairrerme people, whose fires and campsites they had seen.

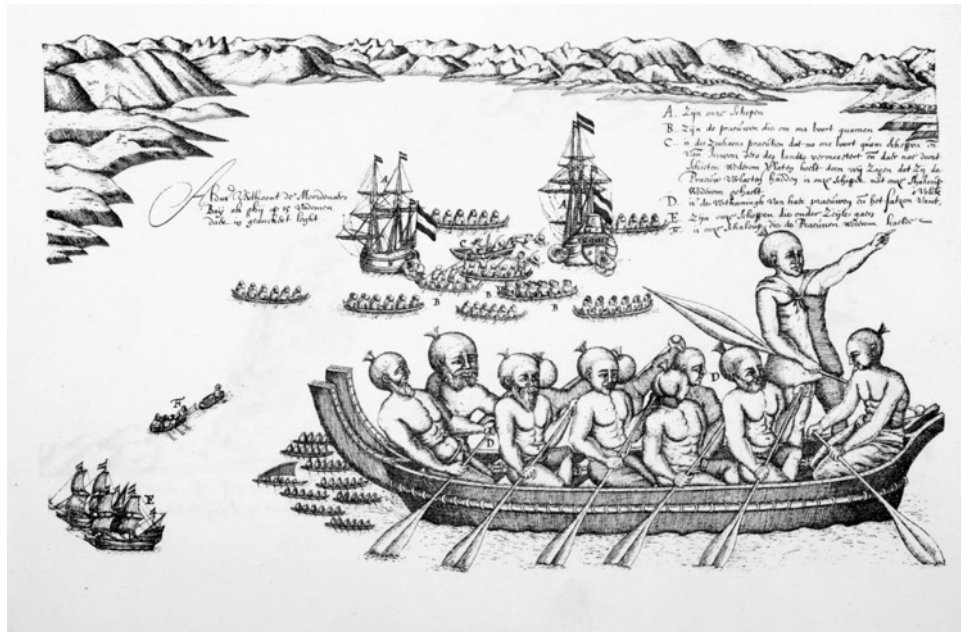


Figure 18 - Isaac Gilsemans, *Natives of New Zealand*, 1642, woodcut, Algemeen Rijkarchief, The Hague. Tasman (1898).

### *Elizabethan Vision*

Discussion of a British visual history of the Antipodes usually begins with reference to John White (c.1540-c.1590), an elusive identity, who travelled on five voyages to the Americas under the patronage of Sir Walter Raleigh between 1584 and 1590.<sup>174</sup> His depictions of Algonquian Indians were a significant departure from earlier European representations of native people, as they appear to more closely resemble the ethnographic subjects, rather than European models (fig. 19). He also created energetic drawings of natives dancing and carrying out a wide range of cultural activities. All of this was achieved by White through an approach that seemed intended to place the viewer in the scene, and close to the action, anticipating the work of British picturesque topographers of the eighteenth-century. Joyce Chaplin describes the result,

The water beneath them is clear enough to reveal the teeming variety of fish in the area. The bottom of the canoe is filled with fish and the two men in the centre of the vessel seem already to be cooking or smoking them... Fish and

<sup>174</sup> Kim Sloan, 'Setting the Stage for John White, a Gentleman in Virginia', in Kim Sloan (ed.), *A New World: England's First View of America* (London: British Museum Press, 2007).

shellfish swarm up to the very bank, on which White has painted plants. Birds hover in the skies above. Every inch of the scene contains something to indicate the land's plenty.<sup>175</sup>



Figure 19 - John White, *The manner of their Fishing*, 1585-1586, watercolour, British Museum.

The artist's project seemed to be to provide a reassuring prospect for life in the colony of Virginia. Viewers of these pictures were indeed meant to imagine them selves as a part of the scene, in which they could share in the bounty of a natural paradise – all that was required was a short voyage across the Atlantic to help populate the new colony. White's drawings were no doubt intended by Raleigh to convince Queen Elizabeth of the benefits of his colonial enterprise. On the return of a voyage in 1584, two Indians were paraded before the court, along with 'skins, furs, copper and

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<sup>175</sup> Joyce E. Chaplin, 'Roanoke "Counterfeited According to the Truth"', *ibid.* p. 58-59.



pearls'.<sup>176</sup> Together with written reports, the drawings would have been invaluable in appealing to the royal court and potential investors on the value of Raleigh's venture.

White's images became more widely available through the engravings of Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), when they were published in 1590 as an addition to *America part 1*, which included Thomas Hariot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*.<sup>177</sup> This volume was published in Frankfurt in English, German, Latin and French; assuring it of a wide readership across Europe, and an enduring influence on later publications of the narratives of exploration and colonization. In particular, White's illustrations marked a shift from representing indigenous people with exoticised European models, to a more accurate focus on their diverse physiognomy. According to Christian Feest, after the rediscovery of White's original watercolours,

commentators with rare unanimity agreed on the unusually convincing nature of his ethnographic representations, especially when compared to the heavily Europeanized features encountered in the works of others.<sup>178</sup>

White's portraits of Indians included a range of inclusions such as tools, bows, quivers of arrows and a variety of ornaments. White's instructions had been to 'drawe the figures and shapes of men and women in their apparel as also of their manner of weapons in every place you shall find them differing.'<sup>179</sup> However, this was not intended simply as an ethnographic account, even though the record of technology and costume proved of immense interest at later times. Such implements were also intended, according to Chaplin,

to give a sense of their admirable status as toolmakers. They are capable of the kind of artifice that distinguished humans from animals and made them similar to the English.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Kim Sloan, 'An Elizabethan "Governour" in Virginia', *ibid.* p. 41.

<sup>177</sup> Sloan, 'Chronology', p. 251.

<sup>178</sup> Christian F. Feest, 'John White's New World', *ibid.* p. 65.

<sup>179</sup> Kim Sloan, 'An Elizabethan "Governour" in Virginia', *ibid.* p. 42.

<sup>180</sup> Joyce E. Chaplin, 'Roanoke "Counterfeited According to the Truth"', *ibid.* p. 56.



Figure 20 - John White, *The wife of a Herowan of Pomeioc*, 1585-93, watercolour, British Museum.

Similarly, bows provided a nostalgic appeal to English pride of their own historic prowess as archers. To consolidate the function of these drawings, White even included three tattooed Picts and two ancient Britons in his published collection, reminding English viewers of their own proud origins. The overall impact of the publication was certainly not to emphasise a savage or threatening people, but rather the opposite. The Algonquians were presented as worthy co-habitants for intending colonists, in a land that could be easily imagined as their own. A sensitive portrait of a smiling mother with her child clambering onto her back (fig. 20) completed White's collection of a natural people with national, even familial appeal.

### *Earliest British Influences*

Prior to this, most images of native people had been created by artists with access only to written accounts, rather than direct experience of journeys. The most famous

of these are probably the drawings of armed American men (fig. X.) by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473–1531). These images depicted ‘actual transatlantic artefacts worn or carried by non-American (and sometimes bearded) men’.<sup>181</sup> Many such drawings at this time resulted from artists, including Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), visiting a 1520 exhibition at the royal palace of Brussels of material brought back by Hernan Cortés from Mexico. Dürer is reported as being speechless in the presence of ‘the things that I have had there, I do not know how to express’.<sup>182</sup> Christian Feest argues that these representations were an essential step in European conceptualisation of cultural diversity and otherness,

At the same time it was a giant step forward from the assimilation of exotic otherness to medieval conventions, such as the 'Wild Men', which was as important for early depictions of the inhabitants of the 'New World' as the model of medieval travel narratives had been for the production of early modern texts.<sup>183</sup>

The fascination that Europeans felt for images of people of the Americas spread quickly to Britain as woodcut engravings of Burgkmair’s images became available from as early as 1508<sup>184</sup>. Small images of man-eating Americans had also begun to appear as cartographic embellishments after publication of accounts of Vespucci’s voyages appeared on his return in 1503. At a time of growing Protestant iconophobia, the proliferation of visual representations of ‘savage man’ in Britain was taken up enthusiastically as a supply of appropriate subjects of interest for a wide range of literary and ecclesiastical decoration.

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<sup>181</sup> Christian F. Feest, 'John White's New World', *ibid.* p. 66.

<sup>182</sup> Christian F Feest, 'The People of Calicut: Objects, Texts, and Images in the Age of Proto-Ethnography', *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Ciências Humanas* 9/2 (2014). n.p.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* n.p.

<sup>184</sup> David Beers Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London: A & C Black, 1990).



Figure 21 - Hans Burgkmair the Elder, *African Man with Brazilian Artefacts*, c.1520, drawing, British Museum.

### *Europe's First Savage Sculpture?*

Located in the north aisle of the Parish Church of Burford, Oxfordshire, is what may be the earliest image produced in Britain of an American Indian. It has been suggested that it may be the first three-dimensional representation of a Native American produced anywhere in Europe.<sup>185</sup> Forming a grotesque border on the commemorative plaque of Edmund Harman (1509-1577) are four naked figures that have been variously described as 'Red Indians', 'Amazonians', 'Tupinamba', and even 'cannibals'.<sup>186</sup> The sculpture provides an intriguing example of the enthusiastic incorporation of Antipodean imagery into sixteenth-century British culture (fig. 22).

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<sup>185</sup> Sherlock, Peter, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008. p. 197.

<sup>186</sup> Mason, Peter, *The Lives of Images*, London, 2001, p. 91-99.



Figure 22 - Unknown, *Memorial Plaque of Edmund Harman*, 1569, sculpture in marble, Burford, Oxfordshire. Photo: the author.

Harman was barber and surgeon to Henry VIII, and rose to Master of the Company of Barbers in 1540. While there is some suggestion that Harman, through his wife's family, may have been associated with Atlantic trade, according to Peter Mason there is no evidence for a direct link to the Americas.<sup>187</sup> Rather it is likely that he was aware of this trade through his association with the Privy Chamber. Sherlock also points to the Stuart and Tudor penchant for punning devices in the selection of four 'hairy men' to represent the surname of the subject. The Latin inscription on the plaque might also hint at the significance of the primitive figures as a testament to the power and dominion of God over all of creation, which included the savages of distant lands, who were at that time (by divine right), coming under English influence,

Laugh at the threats of disease, despise the blows of misfortune, care not for the dark grave, & go forward at Christ's summons, for Christ will be to each man a kingdom, a light, a life, a crown.'<sup>188</sup>

<sup>187</sup> *ibid*

<sup>188</sup> *in situ* translation, Burford Church, Oxfordshire.

### *The Miserable Savage*

In 1688, the buccaneer William Dampier (1651-1715) arrived with the first Englishmen to land on the shores of New Holland. Dampier was not the master of the expedition. His ship, *Cygnets*, was under the command of English privateer Charles Swan, and had been engaged in raids on Spanish colonial territories. However, Dampier's writing proved to be influential on both the expectations and attitudes of future British expeditions to what was soon to become one of its most prized possessions in the Indian Pacific.

Dampier's eventual celebrity was due not only to his career as a pirate, but also his success as a publicist. In the mid-seventeenth century, Europe's understanding of New Holland was largely contained within the library of a director of the VOC, Nicolaas Witsen. The burgomaster of Amsterdam had an extensive international network of scholars and collectors and, through his father's involvement in directing Tasman's expedition, maintained an intense interest in the further exploration of Terra Australis. It was at the time of the coronation of Prince William of Orange as king of England in 1689, that Dampier set sail on his first voyage to New Holland. According to Eisler,<sup>189</sup> Dampier had close relationships with several scholars associated with the Republic of Letters of which Witsen was an influential part. Dampier's focus on observation, collecting and publication reflected this, and ensured that his narrative of *New Voyage Around the World*, published in 1697, was widely read afterwards.

In this publication, which ran to multiple editions, Dampier famously remarked that 'the Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest People in the World... setting aside their Humane Shape, they differ but little from Brutes.'<sup>190</sup> This severe first impression was to be echoed nearly a century later, influencing the impressions and conclusions of Capt. James Cook.<sup>191</sup> Dampier's disappointment was no doubt linked to the lack of commercial dividend available from the people he found on the north west coast of New Holland.

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<sup>189</sup> Eisler, *The Furthest Shore: Images of Terra Australis from the Middle Ages to Captain Cook*. p. 132.

<sup>190</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 132.

<sup>191</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. pp. 169-70.

We sent our boate a shoare to speack with the natives but they would not abide out coming soe wee spent three dayes in seekeing their houses being in hopes to allure them with toyes to a Commerce.<sup>192</sup>

Dampier's record tells of an eventual meeting with the local people, and his attempt to gain their labour in carrying barrels of water to his boats. He attempted to induce their favours with a gift of 'a pair of Breeches ... a ragged short ... and a jacket that was scarce worth owning.' Instead of assisting the English, Dampier recorded that the natives stood around 'like statues' and 'grinn'd like so many monkeys'. According to Nicholas Brodie, this lack of interest in anything the English had, 'was later developed into philosophical master-theories with wide-ranging and long-lasting resonances.'<sup>193</sup> Not only did this confirm in the minds of the British that the people of *Terra Australis* were the most primitive kind of savages, it may also have protected them from exploitation in the still-flourishing slave trade.

Dampier returned to the north west coast of New Holland in 1699. This time, despite the loss of his ship and most of his papers on the return voyage in 1700, he brought back the first botanical specimens and examples of stone tools that British scientists had ever seen from the continent. These were presented to the Royal Society<sup>194</sup> and, together with Dampier's next major publication *A Voyage to New Holland* in 1703, were a significant influence on Capt. James Cook and botanist Joseph Banks on their critical voyage to New Holland in 1770.<sup>195</sup>

In canvassing the eastern coast of the continent, Cook had declared the entire region a possession of the English crown. When Cook landed at Adventure Bay in Van Diemen's Land in 1777, the grand narrative of British possession was able to securely encompass the eastern coastline's southern-most extremity. French scientific voyages led by Admiral Bruny D'Entrecasteaux (1792) and Captain Nicolas Baudin (1802)

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<sup>192</sup> Dampier's original manuscript cited in Brodie, *1787: The Lost Chapters of Australia's Beginnings*. p. 92.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. pp. 98-99.

<sup>194</sup> The stone artefacts collected by Dampier are held in the Sedgewick Museum of Geology, Cambridge, and are probably the earliest Australian cultural artefacts known to exist in a European collection.

<sup>195</sup> Brodie, *1787: The Lost Chapters of Australia's Beginnings*.

may have visited, but their presence was a temporary and at worst inconvenient distraction from the story of British dominion, which was sealed with the landing of Lieutenant John Bowen at Risdon Cove in 1803. While the French were ‘scientifically interested’<sup>196</sup> in Van Diemen’s Land, Bowen had been commissioned by New South Wales Governor King to ‘establish His Majesty’s right to Van Diemen’s Land’<sup>197</sup> and became the colony’s first Commandant and Superintendent.

### *British Vision and the Academy*

The reality of European maritime activity at the time was much more complex than popular histories have portrayed, with profound events impacting on both written and visual narratives of empire. The last half of the eighteenth-century encompassed the equivalent of three world wars, interspersed with the French Revolution and the American War of Independence. According to Robert Tiley, this was an intense period with multiple flashpoints generating social unrest and insecurity as international trade and diplomacy were disrupted.

The navigator’s voyages were often *ad hoc* responses to these flashpoints, rather than purposeful, long-term strategic initiatives. It was difficult to predict how long any of these conflicts – or the short-lived periods of peace that followed each – would last.<sup>198</sup>

Tiley argues that the only way for navigators to proceed without fear of attack, capture or death, was to badge their voyage as being purely for the purpose of scientific and geographical discovery and publication. But the real attraction was in securing fame and influence. This was available to both French and British commanders during wartime with the possibility of prize money creating both heroes and fortunes for ‘a well-connected officer... with luck and courage... who had managed to obtain command of, say, a fast frigate.’<sup>199</sup> However, in periods of peace,

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<sup>196</sup> Reginald A Watson, *John Bowen and the Founding of Tasmania* (Lindisfarne, Tas: The Anglo-Keltic Society, 2003). p. 11.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>198</sup> Robert Tiley, *Australian Navigators: Picking up Shells and Catching Butterflies in an Age of Revolution* (East Roseville, NSW.: Kangaroo Press, 2002). p. 4.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.



naval officers could avoid an impoverished existence by reinventing themselves as exploratory navigators, and look forward to enhancing their celebrity with the publication of accounts of their voyages, and the royalties that would follow. Attractive and intriguing illustration of such publications was critical to their success, and the founding of a 'disinterested, civic-minded art, as part of its liberal-humanist agenda' by the Royal Academy in London in 1768 generated intense competition for public recognition.<sup>200</sup>

According to John Crowley, prior to the Seven Years War, which involved almost every major European power of the time and divided the continent between coalitions centered on Great Britain and France, there was 'little sustained interest' in how places of economic production in the Atlantic or Asian colonies actually looked.

British imperial interests posed few spatial problems that needed to be understood visually, except cartographic ones. British visual culture was no exception here: for most of the early modern period (say, 1450-1750), first hand, topographical representations of what Europeans had seen overseas had little priority in European visual culture... Illustrators gained truthfulness from agreeing with their textual context.<sup>201</sup>

This reliance by artists on the written accounts of others generated a tautological relationship between the work of Europe-bound artists whose imagination of people, places and scenes was informed entirely by what they had been given to read. The result, says Crowley, was a preponderance of iconographic, didactic and usually hierarchical schema more concerned with creating allegorical icons to celebrate European imperialism (fig. 23). In this way images of exotic peoples and savagery came to say more about imperial expansion and national identity than it did about the object being represented. This idea – relating to the dialectic relationship between subject and object – is at the heart of Bernard Smith's concept of European Vision. In this way, particularly for the British at this time, national identity was partially

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<sup>200</sup> John Bonehill, 'This Hapless Adventurer: Hodges and the London Art World', in Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (eds.), *William Hodges: The Art of Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). p. 9.

<sup>201</sup> John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011). p. 2.

defined by the ability to exert superiority and dominance over others. The subject and object occur in a relationship of feedback, leaving an imprint on each other, in perpetual fusion and separation.<sup>202</sup>

After the war's conclusion, Britain had successfully gained territories across New France, Spanish Florida, the Caribbean and Senegal. It could now enjoy the prospect of a global empire ruling over non-British peoples across four continents. This marked the beginnings of a colonial visual discourse and the production of meaning and knowledge of the world.<sup>203</sup> Creating representations of colonized places and people was undertaken as an expression of British national identity. Picturing strategic and commercial expansion at all times demonstrated the compliance of native peoples to imperial will. The place of colonized people in these representations was to dramatise British success, reassuring the viewer of imperial superiority, rather than as figures in an accurate, topographical record. The noble savage had now become a discursive figure, stripped of agency and co-opted into a new role of colonial subject.



Figure 23 - Gottfried-Berhard Goetz, ca.1750, *America*, engraving, John Carter Brown Library.

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<sup>202</sup> Georg Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>203</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).

Amongst the many events of the Seven Years' War, it was the three-day siege of Quebec in 1759 that yielded an event destined to cement the noble savage as an enduring icon of British imperial art. General James Wolfe led the successful defeat of French forces in Canada and established himself as an enduring national hero for the English when he was killed on the battlefield. In doing so he became a figurehead, not only of the Seven Years' War, but of British dominance in late eighteenth-century North America.<sup>204</sup>

Benjamin West (1738-1820), an American artist from Pennsylvania who would later become the second President of the Royal Academy, painted the scene of Wolfe's heroic death in 1770 (fig. 24). As Bernard Smith observed, the patriotic fervor raised by Britain's remarkable victory over the French, and the rich spoils that resulted, made English people 'passionately proud of their contemporary history'.<sup>205</sup> The creation of West's painting, and subsequent publication of an engraving by William Woollett, coincided with an explosion of popular interest in exhibitions by the Society of Artists and Royal Academy in London. Attendance grew from ten thousand in the 1760s, to forty thousand in the 1780s.<sup>206</sup> This in turn stimulated growth in the sale of prints of paintings, made artists increasingly dependent on the success of published engravings of their work, and also enhanced their exposure through the export of prints to other European centres. It also made artists important in ensuring that voyages of discovery were able to generate a rewarding response for their masters and patrons.

The influence of West on the art of empire was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, West had challenged Joshua Reynolds' view that contemporary settings had no place in history painting. Reynolds (1723-1792), in his *Third Discourse*, was committed to 'that grand style of painting, which improves partial representation by the general and invariable ideas of nature.' He warned his listeners against 'the neglect of separating modern fashions from the habits of nature.'

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<sup>204</sup> A young ship's master, James Cook, was incidentally involved in the movement of British troops up the St Lawrence River in preparation for the victory, and would have shared in the exaltation, arguably influencing his evident respect for native people during his exploration of the Pacific.

<sup>205</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 50.

<sup>206</sup> Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture*. p. 4.



Figure 24 - Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, c.1771, oil on panel. Private Collection.

The painter, argued Reynolds, should disregard 'local and temporary ornaments... addressing his works to people of every country and every age. Reynold's concern was that a true history painting should live forever, and that this should be best achieved 'by recourse to the Ancients as instructors.'<sup>207</sup> In Reynold's scheme, there was no place for native people, except as allegorical figures in the replay of a classical drama.

West's great achievement was to eventually win over Reynolds with his triumph of the particular over the general. By depicting his hero in a contemporary British uniform, West's epic painting caused a stir when it was first shown and, according to Edgar Wind, soon became an authorized style of academic painting.<sup>208</sup> Significantly, West included an authentic representation of a Mohawk Indian in his scene.

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<sup>207</sup> Cited in Edgar Wind, 'Penny, West and 'the Death of Wolfe'', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 10 (1947). p. 159.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p. 160.

It is not possible, according to William Truettner, to undertake even a brief survey of imagery of the noble savage, without beginning with the ‘monumental’ portraits of a Mohican and three Mohawk ‘Kings’ painted when they visited London in 1710.<sup>209</sup> These state portraits, ordered by Queen Anne and produced by the Dutch artist, John Verelst (1648 – 1734), were the first portraits ever made by white artists of North American Indian subjects (fig. 25).<sup>210</sup> The Queen’s interest, according to Truettner, was primarily in persuading the Mohawks, who were considered at that time by the British as a sovereign people, to assist them in a series of attacks on the French in New England.



Figure 25 - John Verelst, Four Indian Kings, (left to right) Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow, King of the Maquas; Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row, King of the Generethgarich Nations; Etow Oh Koam, King of the River Nation (Mohican); Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row, Emperor of the Six Nations, 1710, oil on canvas, Portrait Gallery of Canada.

The poses employed by Verelst in his portraits are suitably classical, drawing on traditions of late seventeenth-century British portraiture. The subjects were set in an arcadian scene in which the ‘Kings’ were barely distinguishable from a European subject, apart from hair-style, subtle skin tone and, in one portrait, elaborate tattooing. Each of these qualities broke with Reynold’s Grand Manner, thereby elevating ethnographic art to the Academy. Verelst has collapsed the distance between far-flung territories and the centre of empire, crafting a role for the noble savage as a place-marker of imperial success. As Truettner observes:

<sup>209</sup> See National Portrait Gallery, ‘Four Indian Kings’,  
<<http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/kings/slideshow/kings.htm>>.

<sup>210</sup> William H Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America 1710-1840* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). p. 34.

Verelst has to some extent separated them from the wilderness backdrop that symbolically marks their origins. Unlike others in that backdrop, who remain hunters and warriors in a darker past, the four kings stand on a narrow stage between primitive life and the fashionable London diplomatic circuit, noteworthy examples of noble savagery in transition.<sup>211</sup>

These portraits marked a significant triumph by the British in the use of imagery to secure a political base in the New World. While the “Four Kings,” as they became known, were not the first native American visitors to Britain, their presence at Court and their interactions with Londoners, who treated them as celebrities, ignited the British imagination. While in England they toured London, attending several banquets and plays. Poems, ballads, and music were written about them. The Verelst portraits were placed on extended display in court and their popularity proved so enduring that the engraver John Simon created a series of mezzotints around 1750.<sup>212</sup> British artists responded to the stimulus of this visit as part of a broader reaction to the unfolding conflict in the North American colonies. Most notable among these was West, who continued the depiction of Indians using classical forms and drapery in his own work.

West’s first work to deal with the noble savage was produced on commission and resulted in a figure drawn from the *Apollo Belvedere* (c.120-140). Titled *Savage Warrior Taking Leave of His Family* (fig.26), this 1760 painting points, according to Truettner, to the role of the noble savage in ‘fighting to secure a place for the British and their allies in postwar North America.’<sup>213</sup> Importantly, it also set the scene for the mode of depicting native people in classical poses that would soon play a key role in presenting Tasmanian Aborigines to Europe.

While in Rome, West was taught by Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779). The German painter was influenced by the great art historian Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) to develop novel ways to imitate classical forms. These were often based on the *Apollo Belvedere*, a source to which Winckelmann ascribed a ‘noble simplicity and quiet grandeur’ that came to typify Neoclassicism.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-9.

<sup>212</sup> National Portrait Gallery, 'Four Indian Kings',

<sup>213</sup> Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America 1710-1840*. p. 42.



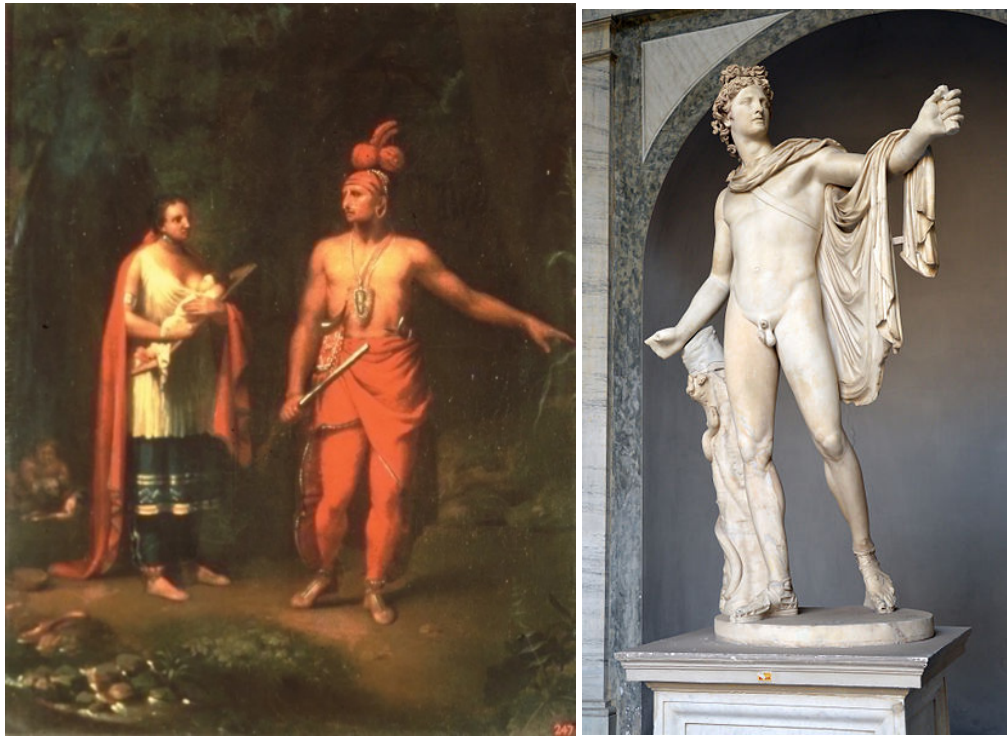


Figure 26 - Benjamin West, *Savage Warrior Taking Leave of His Family*, 1760, oil on canvas. Private Collection (left); *Apollo of the Cortile del Belvedere*, c. 120-140, marble sculpture, Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican.

The *Apollo Belvedere*, since its rediscovery in 1489, had influenced European artists such as Dürer and Michelangelo, and been lionized by Goethe, Schiller and Byron.<sup>214</sup> West is reported by Galt to have exclaimed when first seeing the statue in the Vatican: 'My God, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior!' Galt recorded that the Italians were 'excessively mortified to find that the god of their idolatry was compared to a savage.' However, after reassurance from West of the agility, courage and adeptness with bow and arrow of the Mohawks, the Italians were reported to have agreed that 'no better criticism' had 'been pronounced on the merits of the statue.'<sup>215</sup>

West's neoclassical depiction of an Indian in his *Death of General Wolfe* is poised with classic thoughtful composure, serving as a foil to Wolfe, whose body is already limp in death. West was intent on constructing a palette of historical significance, if

<sup>214</sup> Leonard Barkan, 'Apollo Belvedere', in Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Moast, and Salvator Settis (eds.), *The Classic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 55-56.

<sup>215</sup> John Galt, *The Life, Studies and Works of Benjamin West Esq.* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1820). p. 105-6

not authenticity. The Indian is clearly identified as Mohawk by his tattoos and the same bead bag and tomahawk shown in his *Savage Warrior*. Most importantly, the Indian is restrained by his participation in the collective observation of the death of a great British warrior. He is, as Truettner describes, ‘reserved, brooding, a formidable warrior, and a stoic spectator of death.’<sup>216</sup>

In this setting, the noble savage brings his status to bear under the guiding influence of the empire. Ann Abrams, while describing Indians as virtual stand-ins for classical statuary, suggests another function served by the Mohawk’s presence. ‘For West, the native chief was synonymous with the American wilderness.’ West uses the Mohawk warrior as a marker of place, to ‘personify America,’ and as ‘the most logical and poignant emblem of Britain’s conquest.’<sup>217</sup>

West’s decision to paint *Wolfe* in a contemporary setting provoked severe criticism from Joshua Reynolds, who on seeing the painting before it was finished counseled West ‘to adopt the classic costume of antiquity as much more becoming the inherent greatness of his subject than the modern garb of war.’<sup>218</sup> West’s response was to assert that both he and Reynolds should note that ‘the same truth which gives law to the historian should rule the painter.’ The critical success of the painting when it was exhibited in the Royal Academy’s Pall Mall space in 1771 caused Reynolds to revise his initial assessment that the painting’s ‘unorthodoxy would imperil the growing reputation of art in this country’, to a prediction that the picture would ‘occasion a revolution in the art.’<sup>219</sup>

West had utilized the noble savage as a powerful metaphor of the ethical nature of man, illustrated by a story of contemporary heroism, self-sacrifice, and a triumph of faith. The noble savage now had a place in English art of empire as a heroic figure in the literary tradition established by Dryden, comparable to classic ideals of youthful aspiration so closely associated with colonial endeavor. In contrast to the literary

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<sup>216</sup> Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America 1710-1840*. p. 45.

<sup>217</sup> Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and the Grand Style History Painting* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985). p. 176.

<sup>218</sup> Derrick R Cartwright, *Benjamin West: Allegory and Allegiance* (San Diego: Timken Museum of Art, 2004). p. 6.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 6.



deployment by French writers of the noble savage as a convenient figure with which to criticize the church and state, West elevated the native from being an innocent 'child of nature', to a contemplative companion for national sacrifice, and an icon of the quiet grandeur and sublimity of nature – an apt measure of the great achievement (and cost) of a conquering empire in new domains. However, for this 'grand manner' of noble savagery to be associated with Australian Aborigines, it would be necessary to demonstrate that they were more than the 'miserable' character of hard savagery established by Dampier.

### *A Place in the Empire*

The task of transforming the hard antipodean savagery of *Terra Australis* to a more apt signifier of British dominion fell to one of the most important European artists to accompany a voyage of discovery in the Pacific. William Hodges (1744-1797) commenced his career at the end of the Seven Years War, when Britain had gained ascendancy over France as the foremost imperial nation of Europe. With the patronage of the British East India Company, Hodges became one of the most well travelled artists of his day, bringing his formal training as a landscape painter to the task of representing British conquest in India. According to Geoff Quilley, among Hodges' most important contributions was to give empire a visual and conceptual definition within a metropolitan context through representations of a non-European world. Hodges,

provided or consolidated the cognitive assimilation of the territories depicted, by making an explicit connection, through the visual artifact, between those territories and the British metropolis.<sup>220</sup>

The explosive development of the British art world at the time, together with Britain's own imperial expansion, ensured that Hodges' profuse output played a key role in the development of 'European vision' in the Pacific. Bernard Smith's influential analysis emphasises the role of the British Royal Academy in 'appealing to travelers, virtuosi

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<sup>220</sup> Geoff Quilley, 'William Hodges: Artist of Empire', in Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (eds.), *William Hodges 1744-1797: The Art of Exploration* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2004).

and scientists to observe carefully, record accurately, and to experiment.’<sup>221</sup> This movement, as Smith describes, opened up the Pacific, its peoples, cultures and geographies, to the triumph of Romanticism and science in the nineteenth-century. The dominance of neoclassical approaches to representation of native peoples was profoundly challenged, resulting in a range of impacts on the theory and practice of landscape painting and biological thought.

During this time, co-operation of academy trained artists and naval draughtsmen challenged neoclassical theories of art in much the same way as West’s approach to history painting had expanded the parameters set by Reynolds. This allowed for a greater influence of ‘empirical habits of vision’<sup>222</sup>, shifting emphasis from achieving a unity of mood and expression in landscape painting, to capturing a world of disparate things; driving the evolution of the picturesque at the same time as the topography of empire. This, argued Smith, resulted in scientists moving away from ‘teleological position implicit in the view of nature as a great chain of being... to seek an explanation for the origin and nature of life in the material evidence provided by the earth’s surface.’<sup>223</sup>

Hodges is well known for his contribution to Cook’s second voyage. Cook’s expeditions were the first to include artists primarily for the purpose of making a record of the discoveries made. The initiative by Banks of employing Sydney Parkinson and Alexander Buchan on the first voyage provided the precedent for the success of the following voyages. The value of this record was keenly appreciated at the time, with at least 132 engravings produced in numerous volumes by 1784.<sup>224</sup>

Hodges was particularly interested in light, weather and atmosphere, and through the influence of Sir Joseph Banks, and his appointment to the second voyage of Cook, he found himself submerged in ideas of classification – of plants and animals, of clouds, climates and landscapes. Alexander von Humbolt (1769-1859) had provided a theoretical justification for the idea of a typical landscape and promoted this as an

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<sup>221</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p.1.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Nigel and Van Der Merwe Rigby, Pieter, *Captain Cook in the Pacific* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2002). p. 96.

artistic programme for painters. This emerging understanding of classification led to Hodges' interest in representing types of landscape and, accompanying this, types of man.



Figure 27 - William Hodges, *Otoo, King of Otaheite*, (left); *Portrait of a Maori Chieftain*, (right), 1773; chalk drawings, NLA.

However, Hodges' illustrations of people he met with in the Pacific were not completed within an ethnographic formula, but, according to Smith, drawn 'as he might have done back home in England, and as his master Wilson had taught him to draw, with a feeling for the stance and living presence of a person.'<sup>225</sup> This resulted in portraits that Nicholas Thomas describes as ranging from 'aristocratic', to others, 'look(ing) more like a waif from the streets of London.'<sup>226</sup> Thomas points to Hodges' contribution as succeeding not so much in the delineation of types, as a demonstration of the diversity of native peoples in the Pacific,

<sup>225</sup> Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1992). p. 98.

<sup>226</sup> Nicholas Thomas, 'Hodges as Anthropologist and Historian', in Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (eds.), *William Hodges 1744-1797: The Art of Exploration* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2004). p. 32.

The indices of human variety salient to the voyage were far more nebulous. They included the status of women... the level of interest that native peoples variously exhibited towards foreigners... and the dimensions of native civility.<sup>227</sup>

Hodges did not draw any Australian Aborigines, as Cook's second voyage did not make landfall in New Holland. His portraiture of native peoples were, however, instrumental in cementing the idea that there were two categories of primitivism in the Pacific, which Smith refers to as 'soft primitivism' of the Society Islands, where Hodges visited twice and spent extended periods, and the 'hard primitivism' of the Fuegians, Maoris and Australian Aborigines.<sup>228</sup> The former is exemplified by his drawing of Otoo, the *Arii nui*, or leading chieftain of the Pare region (fig. 27), who successfully united the whole of the Society Islands as King Pomare I. Hodges portrays Otoo with an 'uncertain expression capturing something of the sitter's reported timidity'.<sup>229</sup> The drawing contrasts with his portrait of another chieftain, this time a Maori. Hodges records fine detail of the man's dress and adornment, but despite his social status, the chief is left un-named (also fig 27).

Hodges, while skilled in presenting an ethnographic interest in the detail of dress and adornment, was seeking individual personality. He evoked a presence by 'sympathetic apprehension of the whole' when, according to Smith, the artist began a search for individual personality, as distinct from the depiction of typical people.<sup>230</sup> This marked the entry of the imagination into scientific draftsmanship. It also visually expressed the British assessment of diverse forms of savagery. The un-named Maori chieftain can be seen as a legacy of the impressions of Columbus and Vespucci two centuries before, who had also relegated native peoples' practice of cannibalism and violent rejection of European presence as a mark of 'ignoble savagery'.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>228</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 5.

<sup>229</sup> John Bonehill, 'Hodges and Cook's Second Voyage', in Geoff Quilley and John Bonehill (eds.), *William Hodges 1744-1797: The Art of Exploration* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2004). p. 95.

<sup>230</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*. p. 100.

<sup>231</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 5.

### *John Webber and the First Tasmanian Images*

Cook's satisfaction with the artistic results of his second voyage ensured that he would make it a priority to find a suitable artist to accompany him on his next. On the recommendation of botanist Carl Solander, who had seen an example of the artist's portraiture at the Royal Academy, John Webber (1751-1793) was appointed to the voyage by the Admiralty in 1776. According to Smith, Webber did not have the same skill as Hodges in 'rendering individuality and temperament', but with more experience in figure drawing, and as a competent landscape painter, he was successful in relating the figures of native people to their landscape and social setting.<sup>232</sup> This was to prove invaluable for Cook's third voyage, which more than the first with its focus on botany, and the second's on meteorology, was to prove to be a voyage of ethnography; responding to shifting scientific and popular interest in peoples of the Pacific.<sup>233</sup>

Webber completed over four hundred drawings relating to Cook's third voyage. Among these are the first European views of Tasmanian Aborigines. Cook's instructions, consistent with those of his earlier expeditions were to,

observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition, and Number of the Natives and Inhabitants, where you find any; and to endeavour, by all proper means to cultivate a friendship with them.<sup>234</sup>

Unlike the British expeditions of Dampier a hundred years before, there was no imperative to identify opportunities for trade; beyond 'making them Presents of such Trinkets as you may have on board, and they may like best; inviting them to Traffick.'<sup>235</sup> Further instructions were to take possession of any lands discovered that have not already been discovered by other European powers, 'and to distribute among

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<sup>232</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*. p. 105.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 193.

<sup>234</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 197.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

the inhabitants such Things as will remain as Traces and Testimonies of you having been there.’<sup>236</sup>

The opportunity to offer such presents came on 29 January, 1777, when Cook made the voyage’s first encounter with native people at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island in Van Diemen’s Land. Cook’s visit to Adventure Bay, and his contact with Tasmanians was due to a series of accidents. On Sunday 19 Jan 1777, the *HMS Resolution* lost its fore topmast and main topgallant in a squall. On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> Cook made the coast of Van Diemen’s Land after sighting South West Cape and decided to put into Adventure Bay ‘to get a little Wood and some grass for our Cattle, both of which we were in great want of.’<sup>237</sup>

It was on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> that Cook first makes reference to Aborigines, in dispatching a guard of Marines with shore parties to gather wood and grass. Like Tasman one hundred and thirty-five years before, it was the smoke from Aboriginal fires that was the first sign of habitation. Cook recorded, ‘for altho we have as yet seen none of the Inhabitants we however saw their smoaks but a little way up in the woods.’<sup>238</sup> However, like Tasman, but for a different expediency, Cook was in a hurry to leave. Following the netting of a large quantity of Elephant Shark, Cook seems to have been satisfied with the quality of grass and wood obtained, as he notes that ‘everyone repaired on board... so that we might be ready to sail whenever the wind served.’<sup>239</sup> It was his intention to sail immediately to New Zealand.

In the absence of wind, his departure was delayed. The next day, to make the most of things, Cook sent the carpenter to cut spars, and a mate to survey the bay. It was in the afternoon of Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> that,

we were agreeably surprised ... with a Visit from some of the Natives, Eight men and a boy: they came out of the woods to us without shewing the least mark of fear and with the greatest confidence imaginable, for none of them had

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<sup>236</sup> Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. p. ccxxiii.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

any weapons, except one who had in his hand a stick about 2 feet long and pointed at one end. They were quite naked & wore no ornaments, except the large punctures or ridges raised on the skin; some in straight and others in curved lines, might be reckoned as such.<sup>240</sup>

Cook goes on to describe the Tasmanians as black in colour and with hair 'as woolly as any Native of Guinea', but with 'features far from disagreeable', owing to a remarkable absence of 'thick lips or flat noses'. He also notes 'most of them had their hair and beards anointed with red ointment and some of their faces painted with the same composition'.<sup>241</sup> After an offer of bread was ignored, a filleted portion of fish was offered to the group. Midshipman, John Martin recorded in his journal, 'they seemed terrified at the sight of it' and speculated that this may be due to previous attacks by sharks that were plentiful in the bay.'<sup>242</sup>

Following this aborted attempt at exchange, Cook inquired about the use of a spear being carried by one of the men. Its use was demonstrated by throwing at a mark that he set up '20 yards distant'. Cook records that the thrower 'did not seem to be a good marks man'. At this point a crew member demonstrated the use of a musket at the mark. The Tasmanians immediately retreated into the bush, dropping axes and other gifts, and could not be convinced to return. The journal records that the group made their way then to where the *HMS Discovery*'s party was taking water. Unaware that this group had already had a friendly encounter with Cook, a musket was fired in the air, which resulted in another retreat from contact.

These interactions would have confirmed in the minds of the British that the Tasmanians were unlike the violent savages encountered elsewhere in the region. It would also have seemed to Cook that they were not as sophisticated as the people of the Society Islands. Yet, as Nicholas Thomas points out, there were aspects of Tasmanian behavior that confounded the British.<sup>243</sup> In Tahiti, where the people were deemed to be at the highest order of development of savage people, sexual commerce

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Cited at Note 4, *ibid.* p. 54-55.

<sup>243</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Cook: The Extraordinary Voyages of Captain James Cook* (Toronto: Viking, 2003). p. 294.

had been offered by women to the visitors. Cook noted that some of the sailors made sexual approaches to the women at Adventure Bay, but were ‘rejected with great disdain.’<sup>244</sup> This also resulted in an elderly man ordering the women and children away. Thomas emphasises a view on the voyage that the status of women in a place was considered as an indicator of how close that society was to the ‘blessings of civilization’. Conversely, ‘the more debased the situation of a nation... the more harshly we found the women treated.’ This, he argues, confused conclusions about whether South Sea peoples were civilized or uncivilized.<sup>245</sup> By this measure, it appeared as though the Tasmanians, for all the simplicity of their industry and culture, were far from a picture of ignobility.

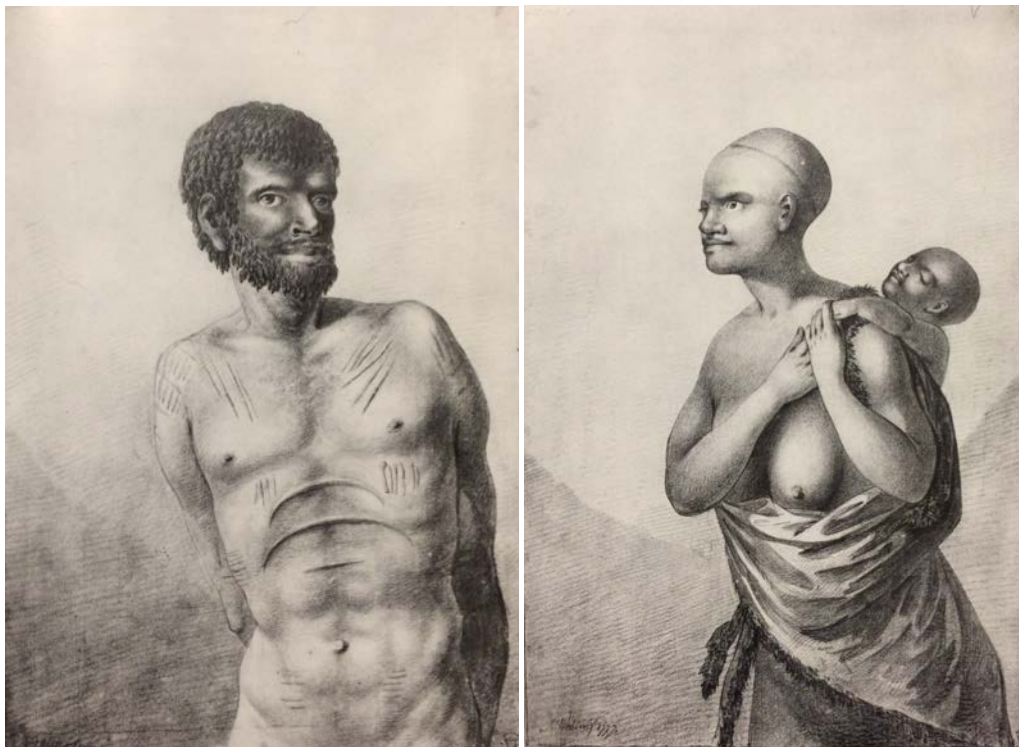


Figure 28 - John Webber, *Man and Woman of New Holland*, 1777, drawings. British Museum. From Joppien and Smith (1987).

The two portraits made by Webber bear similarities to Hodges’ Maori drawings, to the extent that the individuals pictured are not named, and there seems to be no attempt to illicit a sense of emotion or personality beyond likeness (fig. 28). These

<sup>244</sup> Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. p. 55.

<sup>245</sup> Citing Cook’s naturalist George Forster in Thomas, *Cook: The Extraordinary Voyages of Captain James Cook*. *ibid.*



portraits were submitted to the Admiralty by Webber on his return with Cook's approval and subsequently published as engravings.<sup>246</sup> This was not the case for two other drawings from the visit.

The first is an alternative sketch of the same un-named man shown in the portrait submitted to the Admiralty. This drawing is not known to have been engraved. Instead, it is known only from an original drawing held by the Allport Museum in Hobart, Tasmania (fig. 29). This view resembles the *Man of New Holland* closely, but shows only the chest and head, rather than the three-quarter view of the Admiralty drawing. It also seems to be a closer, more personal study. Unlike the other view, the man does not look toward the viewer, but instead stares to his right at an oblique angle, as if in thought. The eyes are large and alert, and a youthful cast to his face creates a sense of vitality and emotion, mixed with pensive mood.

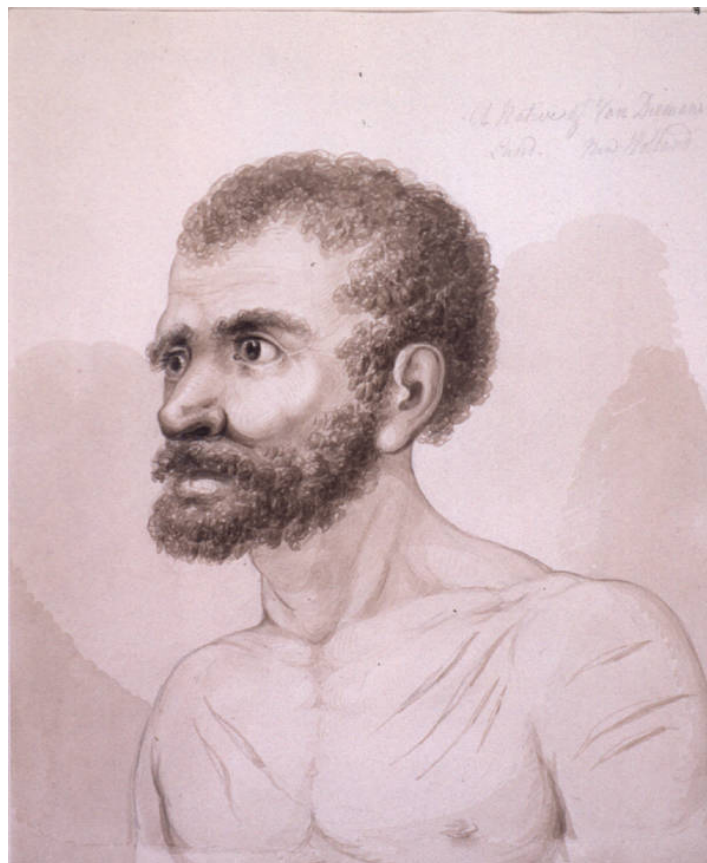


Figure 29 - John Webber, *A native of Van Diemen's Land*, New Holland, 1777, drawing, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania.

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<sup>246</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*. p. 199.

Various reports of Tasmanian Aborigines at Adventure Bay described them as having a 'harmless cheerfulness about them', 'without jealousy or reserve of strangers', and having 'few or no wants & seemed perfectly happy'. However, other opinions were that, 'the inhabitants seemed to have made the least progress toward any kind of improvement since Dame Nature put them out of hand, of any people I have ever met with.' Another officer remarked, 'as for (genius) they have to appearance less than even the half animated inhabitants of Terra del Fuego'.<sup>247</sup> These mixed opinions demonstrate the difficulty that British officers, observing these people for the first time, had in negotiating the ambivalence inherent in their expectations of noble savagery. Webber's published record suggests that, rather than lords of nature, they were to be cast as its children.

Whatever the reason for Webber's rendition of this man, or its rejection by Banks, it remains a most intriguing picture and stands in the archive of pre-nineteenth-century representations of Tasmanian Aborigines as the most humane. It was not typical, nor was it classically statuesque. It was, perhaps, just too real.

The other drawing by Webber that is of great importance is one that seems never to have been finished. Unlike the bulk of Webber's drawings from the Cook's third voyage that were transferred to the British Library, this work resides in the Naval Library in Portsmouth.<sup>248</sup> It refers quite accurately to an event described consistently by several journal entries.

On Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup>, the conditions continued to be dead calm, preventing Cook from leaving. He dispatched further crews to gather wood and grass. Cook went with the wooding party, because Aborigines had been seen walking on the shore,

We had not been (en)long landed before about twenty of them men and boys joined us without expressing the least fear or distrust, some of the were the same as had been with us the day before, but the greatest part were strangers. There was one who was much deformed, being hump backed, he was not less

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<sup>247</sup> Thomas, *Cook: The Extraordinary Voyages of Captain James Cook*. p. 295.

<sup>248</sup> This work was subject to a visual and textual exploration as part of this project in the creative work *Reducted (Cook and Nuenone)*, 2013; and *Interview*, 2016. See Appendix.

distinguishable by his wit and humour, which he shewed on all occasions and we regretted much that we could not understand him...<sup>249</sup>

Webber recorded this meeting with a large pen and wash sketch, showing a group of twenty or more Aboriginal men, including the humpbacked individual, gathered to watch Cook meeting their leader. Cook holds out an object as a gift to the Aborigine. In the drawing it can clearly be seen as a medal, suspended on a length of material (fig. 30). Cook records the moment depicted by Webber briefly, but unambiguously, 'I gave each of them a string of Beads and a Medal, which I thought they received with some satisfaction.'<sup>250</sup>

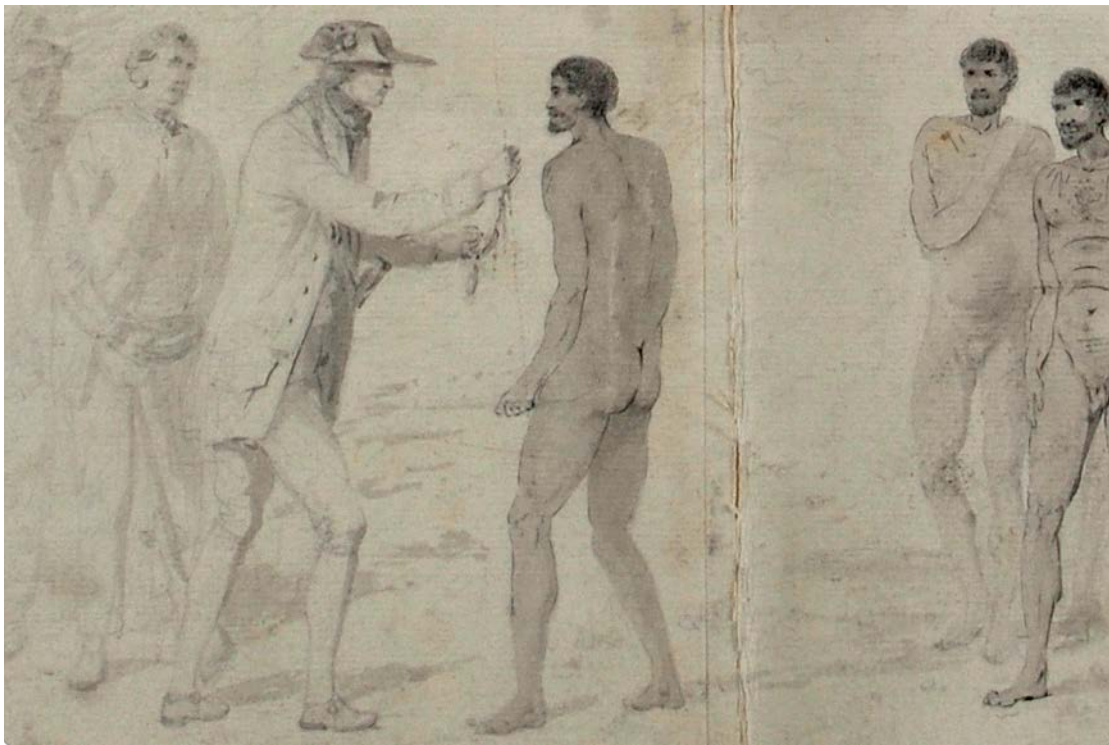


Figure 30 - John Webber, *Capt. Cook's interview with natives in Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land, January 29, 1777*, (detail) pen and wash drawing on cartographic paper. Admiralty Library Manuscript Collection, Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth.

Smith described this drawing as 'foreshadowing what might be described as the official Cook/Webber visual art programme for the voyage.' It is, according to Smith,

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<sup>249</sup> Beaglehole (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery*. p. 54.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

a scene of peace, understanding, with a hope of friendship.<sup>251</sup> As such, *Cook's Interview* plays out in detail according to Cook's instructions for the voyage. This peaceful scene was to be repeated consistently throughout Webber's illustration of the voyage, making the Tasmanian Aborigines archetypes of natural man in the South Pacific.

Webber, as an artist of the Royal Academy, was aware of Reynold's emphasis on the value of history painting, and the effect of West's *Death of General Wolfe* on the ability of artists to place such paintings in contemporary settings. It is perhaps likely that Webber's drawing represented tentative plans for a grand narrative painting that would celebrate Cook's triumphant parade of science and empire through the Pacific. As it turned out, the history painting (fig. 31) that Webber would eventually become known for was to be *in memorium* of the event of Cook's own death at the hands of a truly savage foe on the shores of Hawai'i just two years hence.



Figure 31 - Francesco Bartolozzi and William Byrne, after John Webber, *The Death of Captain Cook*, 1784, engraving, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra.

<sup>251</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*. p. 199.

According to Glyndwr Williams, it is not known whether Webber was on either of the two boats in Cook's party that approached Kealakekua Bay on 14 February 1799. There is also no preparatory sketch or drawing of the scene by Webber among the material handed to the Admiralty on the return of the *Resolution*. The engraving, published in London in 1784, was based on Webber's watercolour. It is not clear from the picture whether Cook is signaling his men not to fire on the Hawaiians, or perhaps beckoning the boats to come closer in order to intensify the attack. However Williams points to the existence of a note, most likely by Webber, that the engraving shows Cook 'calling to his People, in the boats to cease firing.'<sup>252</sup>

The representation of this scene by Webber is consistent with his other depictions of Cook's voyage, focusing on 'greeting, ceremonies and exchange' rather than the conflict that also beset the expedition. This strongly indicates Webber's intention in memorializing the character of Cook, and points to the Adventure Bay scene as emblematic in this regard. The representation of Tasmanian Aborigines served as the first template for this voyage of savage peoples responding with curiosity and openness to the British quest for scientific understanding of their world. In a pantomime produced by Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg called *Omai, or, a Trip around the World* to which Webber was consultant, the libretto by John O'Keefe depicted Cook as 'a peace-loving hero who spread the gospel of the Enlightenment.' If Webber's sketch of *Cook's Interview* can be seen as the opening scene of the navigator's last great voyage of discovery, then the artist's painting of *The Death of Cook* and subsequent pantomime might represent the drawing's brutal, realistic and ultimate expression.

### *Other Eyes*

When Cook made his unplanned and hurried sojourn at Adventure Bay, unlike Tasman, he had the advantage of detailed charts and observations resulting from visits by two preceding voyages. Following the Seven Years War, France was eager to offset the loss of interests in Canada and India. Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811) had served in New France and after an unsuccessful attempt to establish a new

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<sup>252</sup> Glyndwr Williams, *The Death of Captain Cook: A Hero Made and Unmade* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). p. 72.

colony on the Falkland Islands in 1765, he succeeded in gaining support for an expedition into the Pacific. In 1767, he arrived in the Tahiti islands, On his return to France, Bougainville brought not only stories of a beautiful and welcoming population, but was also accompanied by a chieftain's son, Ahu Toru. There were also reports of welcoming canoes, 'filled with women whose beauty was the equal of the majority of European women. Most of the nymphs were nude... the men urged us to choose a woman and follow her ashore.'<sup>253</sup> Ahu Toru, along with tales of the Tahitian paradise visited by the French caused a sensation of interest, not only in the potential for establishing French interests in the Pacific, but in the existence of a utopia. Bougainville's naturalist Joseph Philibert Commerson, a disciple of Rousseau, wrote on his return of a dazzling discovery that confirmed his master's thesis, espoused in *Discourse sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les homes* (1754). According to Commerson, he had discovered,

man in his natural state, born essentially good and free of all prejudice, unsuspiciously and unremorsefully following the gentle impulses of an instinct that remained sure because it had not yet degenerated into reason... neither shame nor modesty exercises their tyranny... the act of procreation is a religious act, its preludes are encouraged by the wishes and songs of the assembled people, and the end celebrated by universal applause; every stranger is admitted to participation in these happy mysteries: it is even a duty of hospitality to invite them, and as a consequence the good Utopian continually enjoys either the sensation of his own pleasures, or the spectacle of those of others.<sup>254</sup>

British commander Samuel Wallis had already reached Tahiti in June of 1767 and, after an initially hostile reception, had also established friendly relations with the Tahitians, discovering the value of iron as a tradable commodity in sexual commerce. Wallis arrived back in England in 1768, and reported to Cook as he was preparing to leave on his second voyage. As a result, Cook made for Tahiti as his first landing place in the Pacific after rounding Cape Horn, with plans to spent three months there.

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<sup>253</sup> Cited in Jacques Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*, trans. Stanley Hochman (Lane Cove, NSW: Doubleday, 1983). p. 28.

<sup>254</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 32.



It was in Tahiti, according to Kathleen Wilson, that Cook's scientific associates, botanist Joseph Banks and naturalist Georg Forster (1754-1794), consolidated a view initiated by Linnaeus of 'female mammae' as a basis for classificatory schemes,

skin colour, lip pigment, fertility, hair texture, and pelvic and clitoris shape also provided grounds for scientists' comparison across cultures... breast shape (was seen) as a sign of broader debasement or inversion of European prototypes among primitive peoples.<sup>255</sup>

The attraction of these men to the shape of Tahitian women's breasts (along with their unfettered access to sexual activity with them), were quickly incorporated into their theories of social progress among South Pacific peoples. Banks, according to Brosse, was 'very successful with the Tahitian women and generally lost no opportunity to profit from such temptations'<sup>256</sup> The respected naturalist, probably mindful of an intimate relationship he had quickly established with Oberea, the corpulent Tahitian queen, wrote 'nature has full liberty (of) the growing form in whatever direction she pleases, and amply does she repay this indulgence.' Forster, in a more scientific mode, recorded that,

The breasts of the women of O-Taheitee, the Society Islands, Marquesas and Friendly-Isles, are not so flaccid and pendulous as is commonly observed in Negro-women, and as we likewise noticed them in all the Western islands, in New Zealand and some of the females of the lower sort at the Society Isles.'<sup>257</sup>

Seemingly equating his own masculine tastes with objective parameters of social organisation, Forster asserted that, 'the more women are esteemed in a nation, and enjoy an equality of rights with the men, the more likely the society is to advance

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<sup>255</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003). p. 42.

<sup>256</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*.

<sup>257</sup> Cited in Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century*. pp 177-78.

towards civilisation.’<sup>258</sup> When Cook revisited Tahiti on his third voyage, following his sojourn at Adventure Bay, John Webber created a visual illustration of Forster’s ideas in his painting of *Poedua, Daughter of Oree, Chief of Ulietea* (fig 32.)

Comparing *Poedua* with Webber’s *Woman of New Holland* (fig. 28), the artist’s resort to classical statuary is immediately apparent, pointing to the influence of Forster’s thesis by emphasising an example of a people closer to civilisation than the Tasmanians. According to Wilson,

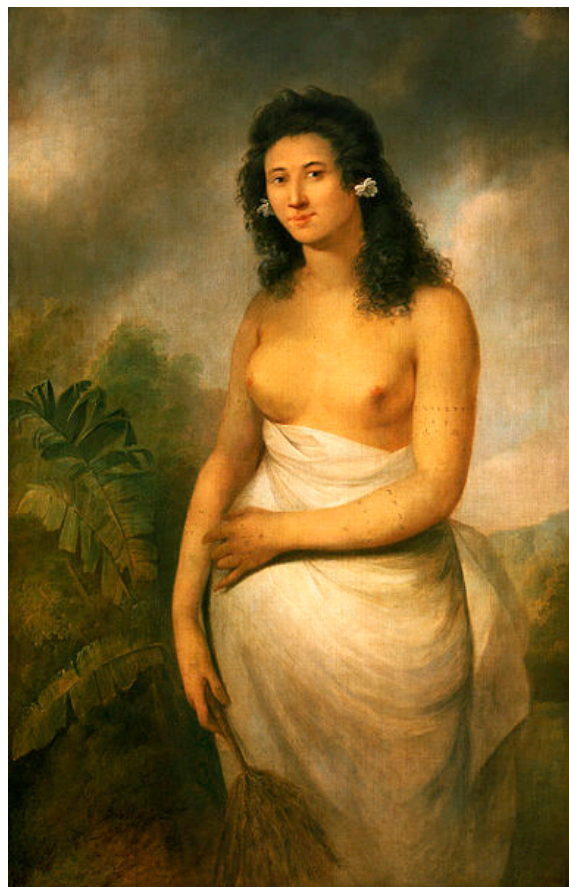


Figure 32 - John Webber, *Poedua, Daughter of Oree, Chief of Ulietea*, 1777, oil on canvas, National Maritime Museum, London.

The visual and literary depictions of the Aborigines of New Holland – held by all the voyagers to be among the lowest on the scale of civilisation – were much less allusive... Cook offered one of his more famous reflections when he mused that they were probably ‘far more happier than we Europeans’ because of their

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid. p. 179.



austere and simple life. But it is the more deprecatory assessments of New Holland's native inhabitants, first offered by Dampier... and alluded to in Forster's description, which inaugurate a tradition that becomes instantiated in visual representations.<sup>259</sup>

In this way, Webber's depiction of the Tasmanian woman established a template for representations by later artists including Thomas Watling and Nicolas-Martin Petit, using pendulous breasts to denote an aesthetic primitivism amongst natives of the 'lower sort'. The sexual availability of *Poedua* is also hinted at by Webber, who positions her with a bold frontal exposure and a direct alluring gaze. Her partially draped lower body was clearly intended to conform to European salon sensibilities, but also hints at Greek statuary and therefore a link in common with Europe to foundations of civilisation in Classical antiquity. In this way her otherness is diminished and her people are pronounced as occupying the highest order of savage nobility. Contrasting with this, the *Woman of New Holland* looks away as if focused on some labour of her own, creating minimal relationship with the viewer. She has more in common with White's *Wife of a Herowan of Pomeioc* (fig. 20), as she carries a child on her back. But curiously, neither her facial expression, nor her posture suggests the gaiety of White's Indians.

Cook did not arrive in Adventure Bay without first hearing of the place from a French navigator who had visited. Cook was able to get information from Julien-Marie Crozet, second in command to Captain Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne (1724-1772), when the two met in Cape Town in March 1775.<sup>260</sup> While Cook's interest was mostly in hearing of New Zealand, any mention of Van Diemen's Land would have been of mixed interest, and may have accounted for Cook's disinterest in lingering at Adventure Bay any longer than necessary. Marion had seen service during the Seven Years War and was pursuing a scientific and exploratory career in the Indian Ocean. He set out from Mauritius in 1771, after Bougainville's Tahitian passenger Ahu Toru arrived there with orders that he be given passage home, eager to visit Tahiti, and to

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid. p. 180.

<sup>260</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*. p. 63.

explore southern waters on his return voyage. After smallpox broke out on board, his passenger died and Marion headed directly for the Southern Ocean.<sup>261</sup>

After discovering the Crozet Islands, the navigator's two ships collided, resulting in damage to the bowsprit and loss of a foremast. In an eerie repeat of the circumstances that drew Cook to the same place five years later, Marion decided to make for Van Diemen's Land to repair his ships. They entered Fredrick Henry Bay north of the Forestier Peninsula on 6 March 1772 and, with Tasman's maps on board, took the same anchorage as the Dutch navigator had done one hundred and thirty years before – becoming only the second European visitors known to make landfall on the island. The expedition left no visual records of their visit. Fortunately, several journal records survive to detail their experience on shore.

Unlike Tasman, Marion made unambiguous observations of human occupation almost immediately. The first sign of Aborigines was made by Lieutenant Le Dez, who reported seeing fires on 3 March, when the coastline was first approached. He recorded, 'we saw numerous fires... which were certainly made by men.' The next day, he reports that the ships approached a large bay. 'To judge by the amount of smoke we saw in several places, this bay must be well populated.'<sup>262</sup> The following day, the expedition reached Fredrick Henry Bay and saw around thirty men on the shore. Several journal records of the following events are broadly in agreement.

The French came in longboats close to the shore to observe the 'Diemenlanders' from a safe distance. The Aborigines proceeded to light a fire on the beach. Le Dez records that, 'when the first boat was within earshot, they said a lot of things to us as if we could understand them, adding several gestures that did not appear to invite us ashore.' Marion then ordered two sailors to undress and swim ashore, taking with them some presents.

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<sup>261</sup> Duyker, *The Discovery of Tasmania: Journal Extracts from the Expeditions of Abel Janzoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Du Fresne, 1642 and 1772*.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

The Diemenlanders, seeing them approaching thus, put their spears on the ground and with several gestures which marked their joy and contentment, came leaping to meet them, singing and clapping their hands.<sup>263</sup>

The sailors were presented with a firestick by an old man and invited to set fire to a pile of wood that had been made on the beach. A duck and chicken were presented in an effort to indicate the desire to obtain more but these, along with other gifts, were discarded. After an hour, Marion arrived in a third longboat and was also presented with a firestick. However, when he lit a fire with it, the mood changed, possibly already aggravated by the arrival of the larger number of French now present, who had proceeded to mount their bayonets. The Aborigines then withdrew to the top of a dune and attacked the landing party with spears and stones, injuring Marion. Shots were fired and the natives retreated, only to return when the French longboats cruised along the shoreline toward the other end of the cove, threatening them not to land again, chasing and spearing the duck that had been left behind. When more spears were thrown and another of the crew injured, 'a more serious volley' was fired. After another retreat, the French gave chase and eventually found a young man dead from the wounds inflicted by two or three musket balls.

While most of the journals refer only the young man found some distance from the shore, Marion's ensign, Jean Roux records that there were 'several dead and many wounded', although he is the only one to do so. The dead warrior was found surrounded by the remains of numerous broken spears, which the Roux surmised had been left as 'an honour rendered to those who are killed in war.' He was examined closely and found to have worms in his mouth.<sup>264</sup> This last comment is the first use of the term 'war' in respect to relations between Tasmanian Aborigines and Europeans. Contrasting starkly with the popular impression of peaceful relations established by later French expeditions, it is a noteworthy characterisation of this first violent encounter; something that was to recur with increasing intensity of the coming decades.

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. pp. 20-43.

Le Dez takes care to make several ethnographic observations, including the presence of raised scars on the chests of the men, the use of red ochre in the hair, charcoal to draw crescent shapes on the body, the wearing of feathers in the hair, and the regular carrying of fire sticks. String or cord is also observed being used to secure children to their mother's backs. He also indicates clearly that the officers had read of Dampier's voyages. Le Dez wrote, 'I compare them with the inhabitants of New Holland of whom Dampier speaks.'<sup>265</sup> Ambroise Bernard Marie Le Jar du Clesmeur, the second commander, makes even more explicit use of Dampier's terminology, 'these indigenous islanders that we have seen... are the most miserable people of the world, and the human beings who approach closest to the brute beasts.'<sup>266</sup>

The visit by Marion du Fresne to Tasmania served to confirm the reputation of native people of new Holland as hard primitives. The combined reports from this first European encounter with Tasmanian Aborigines concluded from their absence of clothing in a harsh, cold climate and no sign of watercraft or buildings (the French only observed 'rude windbreaks'), that they had 'very little industry indeed'. The men were described as having 'a very ugly and mean face... with fierce eyes'. The women, who were unable to be observed closely, 'were completely naked and looked very ugly and poorly-built.'<sup>267</sup> The expedition left without finding fresh water or provisions, or being able to repair their ships. It was concluded that not only the 'Diemenlanders', but the place itself was desolate and unproductive. As discussed, these impressions were available to Cook prior to his arrival in Van Diemen's Land, and are likely to have influenced the expectations of his crew and, in particular, John Webber.

### *Visual Riches: d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin*

On leaving Van Diemen's Land, Marion du Fresne was to emulate one further experience of Tasman's, only this time with more serious results. His next stop was New Zealand, where he was able to establish friendly relations with the Maori he encountered, probably assisted by the crew's familiarity with Polynesian languages

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>267</sup> Jean Roux, cited in *ibid.* p. 42.

gained from Ahu Toru. However, after the confidence of the French had been gained, a series of Maori attacks resulted in the death of du Fresne and a large number of his crew. The French retaliated by burning two villages and killing a number of Maori. Remains of the crew that were found established that they had been cannibalised, further confirming the ferocity and primitivism of savages of the region.

The next French expedition to visit Van Diemen's Land was led by Rear Admiral Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux (1737-1793). He had been dispatched in search of an earlier scientific expedition led by Jean François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse (1741-1788?), which had vanished after calling into the British colony at Botany Bay in 1788. La Pérouse had been attacked in Samoa prior to his arrival in the fledgling colony of New South Wales, losing twelve of his crew. He dispatched documents detailing his progress while at Botany Bay, writing 'the all but savage man who lives in anarchy is wickedder than the most ferocious animals.' His reports were excoriating of *philosophé* such as Rousseau,

they write their books by the fireside and I have been voyaging for thirty years, (the savage man) who is portrayed to us as so good because he is very close to nature (is in fact) barbarous, wicked and sly.<sup>268</sup>

With these last sentiments of La Pérouse ringing in his ears, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux arrived off the coast of Van Diemen's Land in April 1792. Overshooting Adventure Bay, the expedition inadvertently discovered a channel and realized that Adventure Bay was situated on an island. Sailing south, they arrived at Recherché Bay and spent the following weeks charting the newly-discovered coastline. Alongside his knowledge of the violent experiences of La Pérouse, Du Fresne and Tasman with savages, d'Entrecasteaux also had direct instructions from Louis XVI, like those given to La Pérouse,

to treat the different peoples visited during the course of his voyage with gentleness and humanity. He will zealously and interestedly employ all means

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<sup>268</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*. p. 83.

capable of improving their condition by procuring for their countries useful European vegetables, fruits and trees, which he will teach them to plant and cultivate.’<sup>269</sup>

Initial encounters between his crew and Aborigines characterized them as timid and indicated none of the ferocity that had soured the experience of du Fresne at Fredrick Henry Bay. A higher degree of sophistication was also evident when Lieutenant Saint Aignan became the first European to see a Tasmanian canoe (fig. 33). This discovery added significantly to the previous understanding of the Tasmanians as a culture ‘without industry’; although acknowledgement of their maritime technology was modest,

On the beach of our little bay, we found some canoes of sorts, from seven to nine feet long, equally straight above and below... they were made of very thick pieces of bark, brought together lengthwise, and tied up with rushes or some woody grasses. They are in fact merely floats, to which the natives have given the shape of canoes.<sup>270</sup>

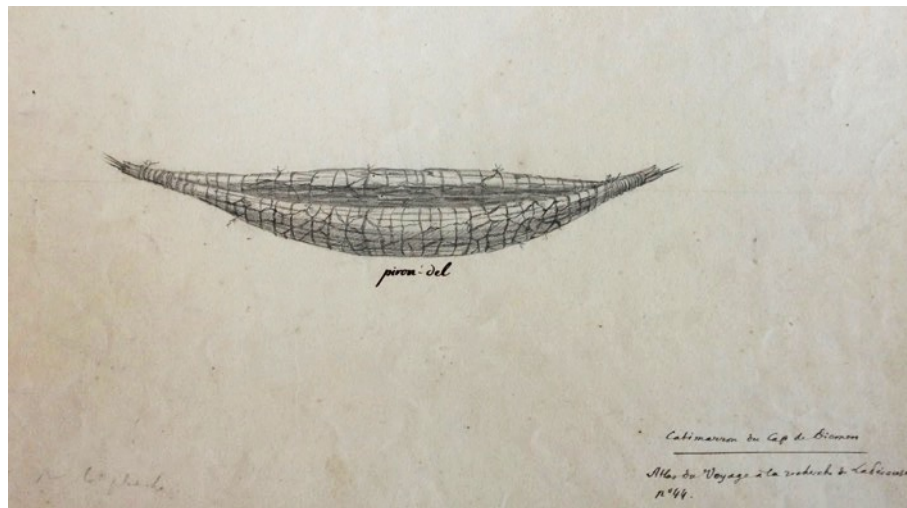


Figure 33 - Jean Piron, *Catimarron du Cap de Diemen*, 1792-3, drawing, Musée du quai Branly.

On at least three occasions, French parties met with groups of Aborigines, surprising them on a forest path, cooking a meal around a fire, and disembarking from a canoe.

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

<sup>270</sup> Cited in Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania*. p. 28

Each time, they were unable to convince the natives to do more than accept brightly-coloured neckerchiefs before they disappeared into the forest, expressing fear of the swords and knives that the French carried.

Less than a month after arriving, d'Entrecasteaux left Tasmanian waters to continue his search for La Pérouse. During this time, the expedition had further encounters with native people in the Solomon and Admiralty Islands, both of which were friendly. After visiting the Dutch colony at Ambon, they made their way down the western coast of Australia and arrived back in Tasmania in January of 1793, after three months of arduous conditions and repeated disappointing landfalls in the arid landscape of Nuyts Land (in the Great Australia Bight), and Esperance Bay.

Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's experience of Van Diemen's Land had been entirely different to du Fresne's. Fresh water was in plentiful supply and supplies of timber were abundant. It was clear that he welcomed the opportunity to return,

It seems that all the sheltered spots of New Holland are gathered together in the neighbourhood of South Cape,<sup>271</sup> to the east one finds an uninterrupted range of harbours, ports and bays... I do not believe that elsewhere on the globe there is such a great number of excellent anchorages assembled in so small an area.<sup>272</sup>

The contrast with du Fresne's stark description of the more arid Forestier Peninsular, which offered his expedition nothing at all of use, must have also tempered the apprehension that d'Entrecasteaux must have still felt about contact with the Diemenlanders. Not long after their return to Recherche Bay in January 1793, a particular event occurred that was to epitomize the level of trust and amity that persisted for the month that remained of d'Entrecasteau's stay in Van Diemen's Land. La Billardiére, the Admiral's botanist, recorded in his journal an encounter with a group of forty-two men, women and children,

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<sup>271</sup> At that time, it was not realized that Van Diemen's Land was an island. Instead, the French referred to it as *Cap du Diemen*

<sup>272</sup> Cited in Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania*. p. 37.

We invited them all to come and rest themselves by our fire; as soon as we had reached it, one of the savages expressed to us, by unequivocal signs, that he had come to reconnoiter us during the night: in order to make us comprehend that he had seen us asleep, he put his right hand up on one side of his head, which he inclined, at the same time shutting his eyes to express sleep; with the other hand he showed us the place where we had passed the night... Our fire had been a landmark for the native, whom this tribe had charged to come and watch our motions. As for us, although we had been, during this whole night, entirely at the mercy of these savages, we had not on that account had a less quiet sleep.<sup>273</sup>

After this exchange, the French party made their way toward a rendezvous point with their boat. The Aborigines travelled with them,

The attentions which these savages lavished on us, astonished us prodigiously. Was our way encumbered by heaps of dry branches, some of them walked before us, and placed them on the edges of the path: they even broke off those, which, being still attached to the fallen trees, obstructed the road that we were following. We could not walk on the dry grass without slipping every moment, especially in the sloping places; but these good savages, to hinder us from falling, supported us, by taking hold of our arm... As they obstinately persisted in paying us these obliging attentions, we resolved no longer to refuse them.<sup>274</sup>

On 10 February, after nearly two weeks at Recherche Bay, 'a great number' of the expedition set out to meet with the local people again. They were met soon after landing and then taken to a large camp about a mile distant, where they were met with by a large group of forty-eight, comprising ten men, fourteen women and twenty-four children, gathered around seven fires.

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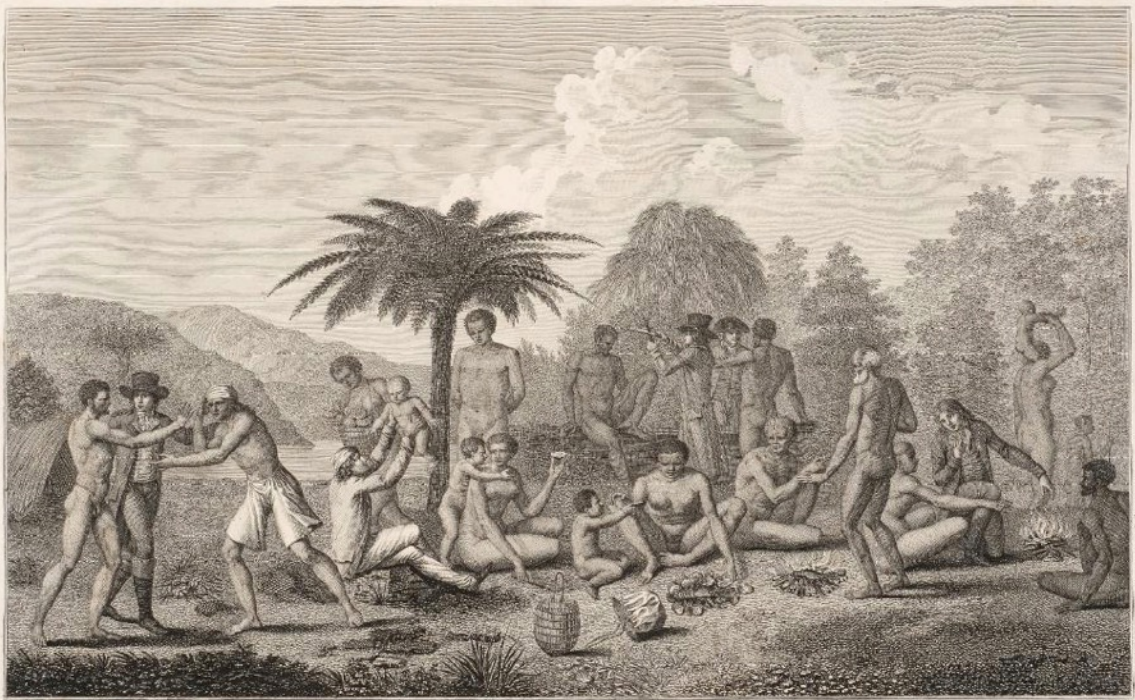
<sup>273</sup> Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*. p. 289.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. pp 290-91.





PÊCHE DES SAUVAGES DU CAP DE DIEMEN.



SAUVAGES DU CAP DE DIEMEN PRÉPARANT LEUR REPAS.

Figure 34 - Jacques-Louis Copia, *Pêche des Sauvages du Cap de Diemen*, 1791 (top); *Sauvages du Cap de Diemen préparant leur repas*, 1791 (bottom), engravings after Jean Piron, author's collection.

This gathering was the first and only glimpse of Tasmanian Aboriginal life by Europeans before effects of conflict, disease, displacement and war began to disrupt their lifestyle. The demographics of the group are especially significant, showing a viable and thriving age/sex structure that was to be severely impacted over the next three decades. D'Entrecasteaux remarks in his journal on the health of the group, noting that there was no sign of skin disease.<sup>275</sup> The French witnessed women and their daughters diving for shellfish, as well as complex family interactions, and made detailed observations on the preparation of food. D'Auribeau records in his journal that Piron,

has done (a drawing) of each particular individual, the whole meeting during the meal, fishing etc. – the truth, the naturalness that this clever artist has had the talent to achieve in every respect will completely satisfy those who wish to be acquainted with the overall group and the details.<sup>276</sup>

The group drawings were published as two views in Jacques-Julien Houton de La Billardière's atlas, *Relation du voyage a la recherche de La Perouse* in 1791 (fig. 34). One of the original drawings is held by the musée du quai Branly in Paris. It reveals significant changes made by the engraver (presumably under instruction from La Billardière) and warrants further discussion, which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. It is useful to briefly note as an example, however, the modifications (fig. 35) to the two family groups shown in *Pêche du Sauvages*. The large group on the left is simplified from the original twelve individuals to seven (perhaps for compositional elegance), and the smaller group on the right has a poorly drawn old woman replaced by a youthful male.<sup>277</sup> As discussed earlier, the depiction of older women with drooping breasts had become strongly associated with hard savagery. It is possible that this change was intended to emphasise the nobility of the Tasmanians to European patrons, by avoiding any suggestion of decrepitude.

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<sup>275</sup> Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania*. pp. 39-40.

<sup>276</sup> Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*. p. 283.

<sup>277</sup> It can be noted that the old woman's legs are disproportionately large, however, this does not explain the decision to change both gender and age of the substituted figure.

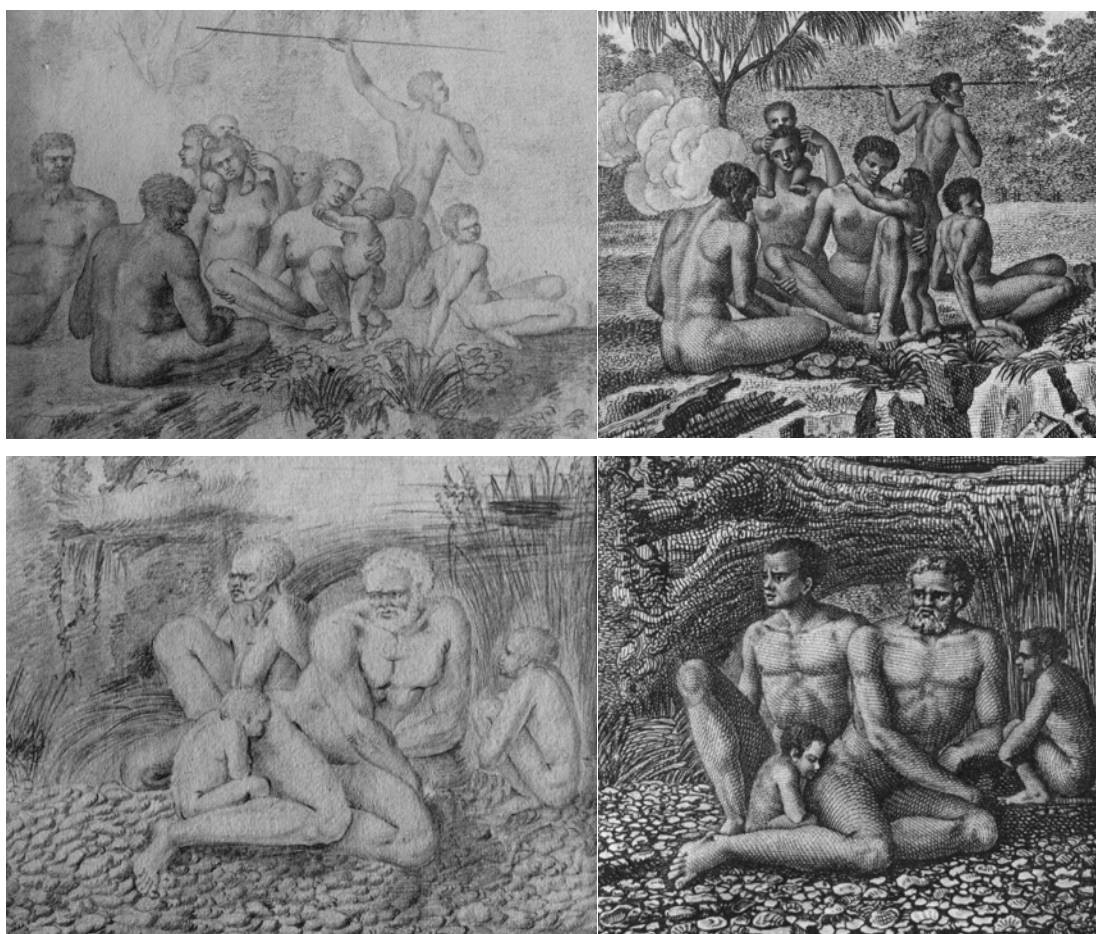


Figure 35 - *Peche des Sauvages du Cap de Diemen*, comparison of drawing by Jean Piron, (left) musée du quai Branly; and engraving by Jacques-Louis Copia, author's collection, (right).

The influence of Antiquity on Piron's drawing of the Aborigines is clear from the drawing and Copia's engraving, the latter improving on Piron's often errant anatomical proportion. Copia's engraving *Femme du Cap de Diemen* illustrates this well (fig. 36). John Mulvaney complements the artist on his work, but criticises this representational style,

This extraordinary encounter of racial harmony was eternalized by Piron, whose realistic sketch of the occasion was spoiled by his and the Paris engraver's emphasis on classical artistic forms which possibly exaggerated Piron's classicism.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>278</sup> D. J. Mulvaney, 'The Axe Had Never Sounded: Place, People and Heritage of Recherche Bay, Tasmania', (Canberra: ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc, 2007). p. 61.



Plomley is also critical of Piron,

His portraiture was so fixed in Greek classical models that little can be learned from it about the bodily characteristics of the native people he painted or sketched while on the voyage... his sketches of the gatherings of the natives at Recherche Bay do give some idea of the scene.<sup>279</sup>

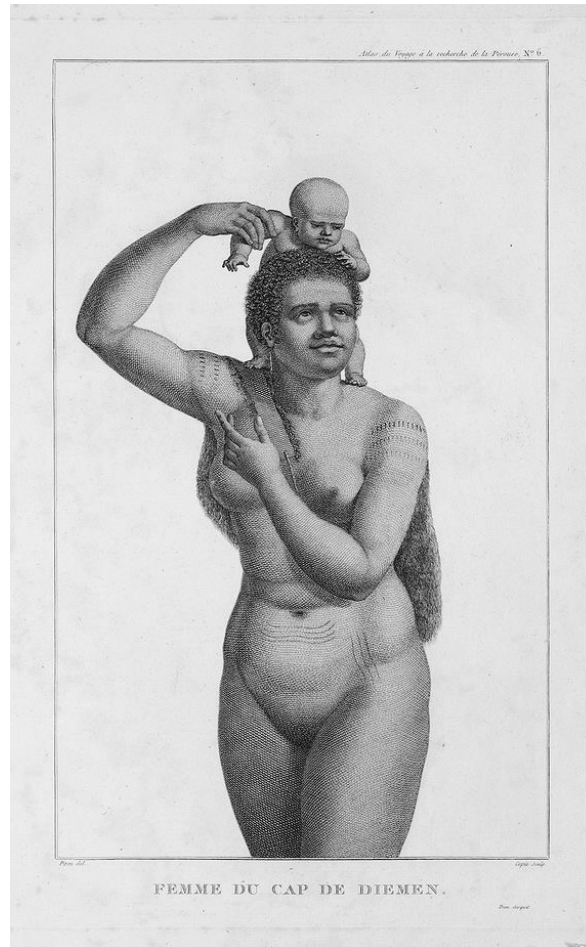


Figure 36 - Jacques-Louis Copia, *Femme du Cap de Diemen*, 1791, engraving after Jean Piron, musée du quai Branly.

Both Mulvaney and Plomley are correct from an ethnographic and anthropological viewpoint insofar as these disciplines are concerned with the study of native people. However, as Degérando pointed out to in 1800,<sup>280</sup> a suite of potential flaws in

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<sup>279</sup> Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*. p. 25.

<sup>280</sup> Joseph-Marie Degérando, *The Observation of Savage Peoples*, ed. F. C. T. Moore, trans. Moore (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

observation are possible, including an inability to reflect on the observer's own perspective. As I have outlined above, the relationship between European ideas of the noble savage are deeply rooted in the traditions of Antiquity and the relationships between ideas about the Golden Age and notions of the natural state of man. Bernard Smith explained this succinctly as a way of transforming 'a state of miserable wretchedness... into the state of primitive elegance.'<sup>281</sup> Such interpretations, and further development by engravers acts to enhance not only the compliance with ideas of noble savagery, but also historical moment. Smith refers to the example of criticisms made of William Hodge's work by George Forster in this regard,

The plates which ornamented the history of Captain Cook's former voyages, have been justly criticized, because they exhibited to our eyes the pleasing forms of antique figures and draperies instead of those Indians of which we wished to form an idea... the connoisseur will find Greek contours and features in this picture, which have never existed in the South Sea.

Plomley and Mulvaney would appear to be in agreement with Forster. However, as Smith points out, the rhetorical purpose of such representation was to emphasise the significance of the scene being depicted, which to both artist and officer aspiring to put their voyage into publication, warranted, 'sufficient historical moment to be illustrated in the elevated style of history painting.'<sup>282</sup> The neo-classical influence apparent in these drawings and their reproductions inform the art historian of a wealth of qualities that are essential to understand, not so much about the subject, than the artist and the context of his production.

It is not easy to explain the stark difference in the reception received by Marion and d'Entrecasteaux. However, this matter is important to understanding the way Tasmanian Aborigines were depicted by European artists who followed Marion's visit. Firstly, it would be a mistake to assume that the Aboriginal people of the Forestier Peninsula should have the same attitude to the French as those of Recherche Bay. The distance between these locations is significant and there is ample evidence

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<sup>281</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 40.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid. p. 74.

from later records<sup>283</sup> that the customs and language of neighbouring nations differed substantially. However, it is possible that, during the intervening twenty years, stories had spread of the death and injury caused by the superior weaponry of Europeans following the French attack at Fredrick Henry Bay. Frequent journal entries also note how afraid the people were of knives, swords and muskets. In one instance, the second in command, D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau records how he demonstrated the explosive effect of gunpowder by filling an oyster shell and lighting it,

The resulting explosion produced the greatest fright at first, then admiration. They pressed me strongly to do it again several times, and their astonishment was always the same. I had a double barrelled gun brought to me, but the moment they saw it, they fearfully gave me to understand that they were afraid of it. They lay down with their eyes shut, wishing to show me that this weapon caused death.<sup>284</sup>

It seems highly likely that the people with whom d'Entrecasteaux's crew were interacting had witnessed fatal violence from Europeans, probably personally. This points to more recent experiences that could easily be attributed to du Fresne. Between 1722 and 1793, the waters around Recherche Bay and Bruny Island, all within the range of this nation of people, had been visited by several other voyages. Captain Tobias Furneaux did not report meeting any natives when he came ashore at Adventure Bay in 1773, although he saw huts and collected some baskets and spears. Cook's interactions in 1777 were reported as cordial, although one of his landing parties is recorded as having fired their muskets to frighten away an approaching group. However, there are no records in any of the numerous journal entries that any Aborigine was injured or killed.

William Bligh, who was with Cook on his third voyage, returned to Adventure Bay in 1788 on his way to Tahiti. Bligh saw a large party of natives, recognizing the hunchback who had been drawn by Webber during the earlier visit. Again, there was

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<sup>283</sup> See, for example Henry Ling Roth et al., *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (Facsim. of the 2nd rev. and enl. ed. with map edn.; Hobart: Fullers Bookshop, 1968).

<sup>284</sup> Plomley and Piard-Bernier, *The General: The Visits of the Expedition Led by Bruny D'entrecasteaux to Tasmanian Waters in 1792 and 1793*. p. 279-80.

no record of conflict, however, La Billardière notes in his journal his view that the Aborigines he met on Bruny Island had encountered Bligh.<sup>285</sup> Captain John Henry Cox was next to come ashore in Van Diemen's Land in 1789, but first anchored at Cox's Bight on the far south coast, where he recorded seeing huts, but no people. He missed Adventure Bay and next anchored near Maria Island, far to the north. Here, he met with two groups of Aborigines, who he wrote were disinterested in interaction or trade. Again, no conflict was reported.<sup>286</sup>

Finally, Bligh made a second voyage, landing at Adventure Bay in February 1792. Bligh did not himself see any Aborigines, but reports were made by parties that were sent ashore on each of the three days he was at anchor. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, they reported a friendly exchange with a group of twenty-two men and women. Among the shore party was George Tobin (1768-1838), a naval officer and amateur natural history painter, who had taken over as official artist for the expedition when W. Kirkland withdrew due to illness. Tobin produced a series of views with the hope that they would be published in an atlas of Bligh's voyage. This did not occur, with the original drawings instead ending up, along with Bligh's journals in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.<sup>287</sup> Among Tobin's watercolours are a series of landscapes featuring Aboriginal huts and the remains of their camping places. One includes a group of Aborigines standing on the shore waving to Bligh's ships (fig. 37).

The figures are distant silhouettes, of ethnographic interest only because of the inclusion of huts in the foreground. However, this painting is of significance as the first topographical view of Tasmanian Aborigines known to have been made. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the painting conforms in style to similar views being made at Port Jackson (Sydney) around that time, where Aboriginal figures were included more as an illustration of colonial enterprise than any for other purpose. However, Tobin's picture is also notable as any sign of Aborigines in such scenes was

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid. p. 297.

<sup>286</sup> Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania*. pp 6-19. See also Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines*, 1802. pp. 166-7.

<sup>287</sup> Joan Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists : Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992). pp 805-5.

almost completely absent from the visual record once a permanent British presence was established in Van Diemen's Land in 1803.



Figure 37 - George Tobin, *In Adventure Bay, Van Diemen's Land*, 1792, watercolours, State Library of New South Wales.

Despite this record of meetings with Tasmanian Aborigines, and even drawings being made by the succession of British navigators visiting the vicinity, there is no clue to how the people that d'Entrecasteaux met with came to be familiar with the deadly effects of European weaponry. However, it is clear that the British had already established as part of their very first claim to the eastern part of New Holland a readiness to resort to use of firearms whenever it was deemed convenient. Firing on natives was certainly not restricted to defense, or as an act of last resort. Joseph Banks made this clear in his account of the difficulties experienced in landing at Botany Bay,

That they are a very pusillanimous people we have reason to suppose from every part of their conduct in every place where we were except Sting Rays (Botany) bay, and there only the instance of the two people who opposed the



Landing of our two boats full of men for near a quarter of an hour and were not to be drove away til several times wounded with small shot...<sup>288</sup>

By way of justification, Banks went on to say that their decision to open fire was based on a suspicion that the spears the Aborigines were carrying may be tipped with poison. However, in instances where a justification was not readily available, there must be considerable potential for violent events to have occurred that went unreported. Sydney Parkinson, Banks' artist on Cook's first voyage (1768-71) had, according to Donaldson, the greatest sympathy for the Pacific peoples. Parkinson recorded his dismay at the response of the crew only two days after their arrival in Tahiti,

A boy, a midshipman, was the commanding officer, and giving orders to fire, they obeyed with the greatest glee imaginable, as if they had been shooting wild ducks, killed one stout man and wounded many others.<sup>289</sup>

It is difficult therefore, to exclude the likelihood that the Aborigines at Adventure Bay had not suffered an unrecorded attack by Europeans. It can probably be concluded that violent encounters were had, but went deliberately unrecorded by one or more of these expeditions; or perhaps some other visit was made that is not reflected in the archive. However, neither of these possibilities is supported by current evidence. Plomley suggests that the influx of European sealers from Sydney that began in 1798 may have been responsible for the familiarity with European weapons demonstrated by the Aborigines Baudin met with.<sup>290</sup> This assertion is supported by Jones.<sup>291</sup> However, this explanation cannot explain the evidence from d'Entrecasteaux that such fear existed five years before this. Clearly there is a need for further research to investigate this question.

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<sup>288</sup> John Cawte Beaglehole (ed.), *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771* (Vol. 2; Sydney: Public Library of NSW with Angus & Robertson, 1962). p. 134.

<sup>289</sup> Cited in Bernard Smith, 'The First European Depictions', in Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson (eds.), *Seeing the First Australians* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985).p. 29.

<sup>290</sup> Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1802*. p. 212.

<sup>291</sup> Jones, 'Images of Natural Man'. p. 57.

After d'Entrecasteaux's departure in 1793, a series of further expeditions were mounted by John Hayes, George Bass and Matthew Flinders, the latter involving the first known circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land. Flinders established for the first time for European navigators that a large strait of water separated this island from the continent of New Holland. All these voyages encountered Tasmanian Aborigines, but no visual record of them or any aspect of their presence is known to have been made. The final voyage of exploration to Van Diemen's Land, and the one that generated the greatest artistic legacy, was made by Nicolas Baudin (1754-1803), which returns us finally to the work of Charles Lesueur and Nicholas Petit.

When d'Entrecasteaux left Van Diemen's Land, the experience of a simple utopian life he had observed there was starkly contrasted by his next encounters. With the fate of du Fresne still fresh on his mind, his expedition passed by New Zealand without stopping; allowing only limited exchange of goods with Maori from their canoes. At New Caledonia he was offered human flesh by the otherwise friendly locals, and on arriving at Vanikoro, where unknown to him La Pérouse had been wrecked, his ship was attacked. Ultimately, his expedition ended in tragedy, as d'Entrecasteaux and many of his crew died from the effects of scurvy and dysentery. While much of the expedition's collections were confiscated in the chaos that followed the outbreak of the French Revolution and war with the Dutch, the Republican La Billardière succeeded in publishing his *Relation du voyage a la Recherche de la Pérouse* in 1799.<sup>292</sup> Baudin, setting off on his voyage in 1800 had access to this atlas, which included engravings of Piron's portraits of the people of Cape du Diemen, and the celebratory records of their generous treatment of the French, thus ensuring his anticipation of the Tasmanians was a positive one.

Although the voyage was also intended to make observations of British presence in New Holland, it was primarily a scientific venture.<sup>293</sup> After a long and arduous

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<sup>292</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*. p. 90.

<sup>293</sup> French expeditions were as much about maintaining naval prestige, and monitoring the activity of other European powers in the region to obtain geopolitical and commercial intelligence, as they were about scientific discovery. See Catherine Gaziello, 'French Interests and Ambitions', in John Hardy and Alan Frost (eds.), *European Voyaging*

passage across the Indian Ocean, during which the crew were short on rations and in poor morale, the first experience of New Holland was of the arid western coastline. At Geographe Bay, at the southwest corner of the continent, they made their first contact with an Australian Aborigine. After a larger group fled on their arrival, they managed to catch up with a pregnant woman. She was described as ‘horribly ugly and disgusting.’<sup>294</sup> However, on arrival in Van Diemen’s Land, where they were surrounded by a landscape and people made already familiar by La Billardière’s illustrated descriptions, the reception was effusive. Zoologist François Péron wrote of his first contact with a small family group at Port Cygnet on 13 January 1803, describing a young man as,

of a strong general appearance, having no other defect than the looseness of the joints of his arms and legs, characteristic of his nation... His physiognomy had nothing fierce or austere, his eyes were lively and expressive, and his manner displayed at once both pleasure and surprise.<sup>295</sup>

Later translations of Péron’s atlas refer to ‘leanness of the legs and arms’,<sup>296</sup> a quality that was to later be emphasized in Piron’s full-length portraits (fig. X). The ‘expressive’ character of the young man was soon demonstrated to be an inquisitive intelligence after he carefully inspected the bodies of the Frenchmen, especially the whiteness of their skin. This became even more apparent when he examined their *chaloupe* (ship’s boat),

our chaloupe seemed to attract his attention still more than our persons, and after examining us some minutes, he jumped into the boat: there, without troubling himself with, or even noticing the seamen who were in her, he seemed quite absorbed in his new subject. The thickness of the ribs and planks, the strength of the construction, the rudder, the oars, the masts, the sails, he observed in silence, and with great attention, and with the most unequivocal

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*Towards Australia* (Occasional Paper 9; Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1990).

<sup>294</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*. p. 99.

<sup>295</sup> Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere*. np.

<sup>296</sup> Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands*. p. 124

signs of interest and reflection ...he made several attempts to push off the chaloupe, but the small hawser which fastened it, made his efforts of no avail, he was therefore obliged to give up the attempt and to return to us, after giving us the most striking demonstrations of attention and reflection.'<sup>297</sup>

It is clear from these records that the idea of an ignorant savage, incapable of industry, had disappeared from French thinking about native people in Tasmania,

By this time the Frenchmen possessed an inherent feeling that this part of New Holland was theirs. They would not admit, even to themselves, that Van Diemen's Land was part of New South Wales, and a British possession.<sup>298</sup>

The initial fraternal response may have represented the first warming to Tasmanian Aborigines as potential citizens of the Republic. In any event, it is from the combination of Péron's atlas and Petit's drawings that named portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines appear. This marks a significant step in personal representation, possibly reflecting Republican ideals of individuality that, unlike the previous French expedition, now dominated Baudin's.<sup>299</sup> The anarchic threat that individual reason posed to church and monarchic rule had already resonated with the natural, rational figure of the noble savage in French literature, and may well have inclined Péron to reflect this by undertaking the revolutionary act of personalizing Tasmanian Aborigines for the first time.

Petit's portfolio of portraits includes at least eleven different men and two or three women,<sup>300</sup> two with babies, together with a young boy include six named individuals. Five of these are reproduced in the published atlas. The artist's portraits are already

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<sup>297</sup> Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere*.

<sup>298</sup> Taylor, *The Discovery of Tasmania*. pp. 122-3.

<sup>299</sup> French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, including Voltaire and Rousseau, had emphasized 'enlightened self-interest', leading to a French Revolutionary 'Société d'Individualistes'. Steven Lukes, 'The Meanings of Individualism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31/1 (1971).

<sup>300</sup> Rhys Jones refers to Pomley in asserting that three women were drawn. However, a closer reading of Péron's journal points to the possibility that only two women were sketched by Petit. Jones, 'Images of Natural Man'. p. 52.

discussed above and clearly describe men and women with personality and, above all, intelligent agency.

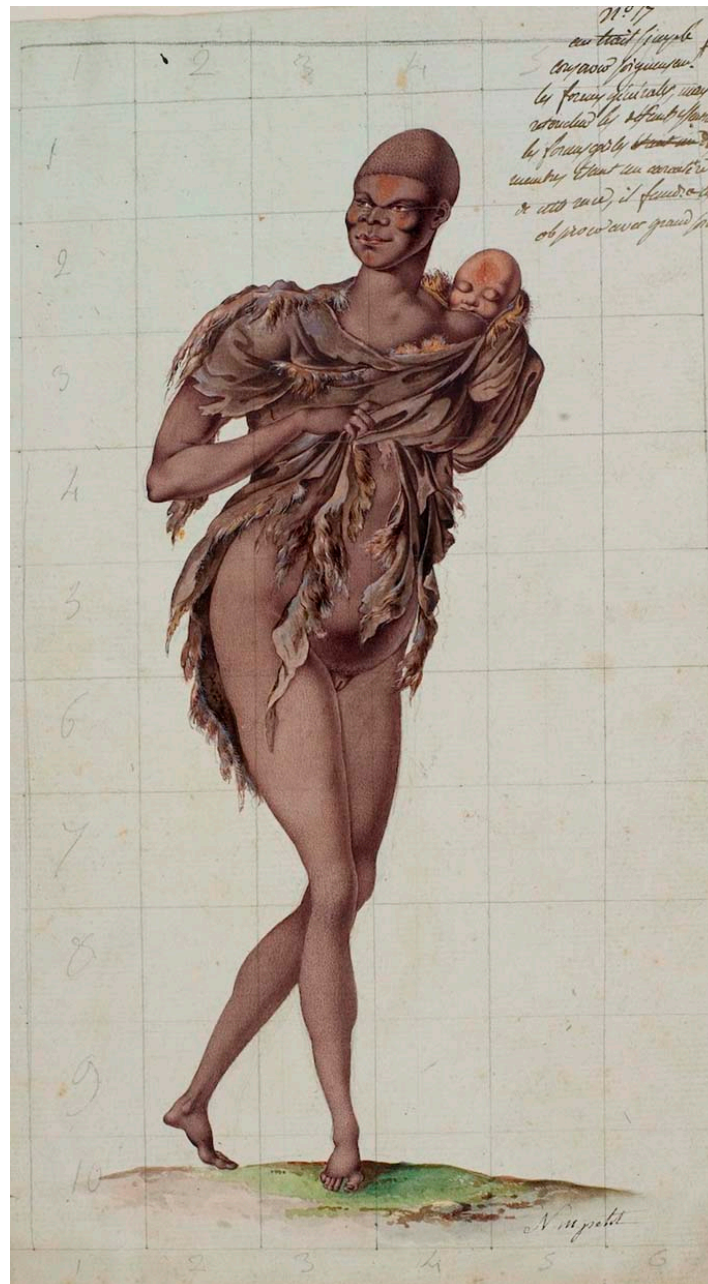


Figure 38 - Nicolas-Martin Petit, *Portrait of an Aboriginal Woman Standing*, watercolour, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre.

His triumph, as a combination of ethnography and aesthetics is surely the full-length portrait of a woman (fig. 38). While she is not named on the ethnographic drawing, her physiognomy, together with the decoration of her face with a characteristic pattern of ochre suggests that this may be the woman identified in another portrait as Arra-

Maida (fig. 39). Péron mentions her by name and refers to his request to Petit that she be drawn, adding of the drawing,

M. Petit, at my request, drew a likeness of her, and which is a very correct resemblance: in the features may be easily discovered that expression of courage and superiority, which so eminently distinguished her from her companions. The last time I met with her, she had a young child at her back.<sup>301</sup>



Figure 39 - Nicolas-Martin Petit, *Terré de Diemen, Arra-Maida*, 1803, watercolour, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre (left); *Terré de Diemen, Arra-Maida*, engraving by Barthelemy Roger, after Petit, 1807, National Library of Australia. (right).

There is ample evidence from journal entries and from differences between Petit's initial sketches and drawings produced for the engraver, that Péron was directing the artist to not only emphasise certain aspects of anatomical and ethnographic characteristics of several individuals observed throughout their visit, but to combine these in the final rendering of individuals. The woman (Arra-Maida) drawn in full length combines a pose of classical statuary and resists emphasis of the woman's primitive state usually achieved by exposure of the breasts. Instead, her pelvis is revealed, detailing a shaved pubic area and vulva, as noted in the appearance of a woman seen during Péron's visit to Cygnet Bay. The artist Petit was not present on that day, instead, making sketches of men and women the following day on Bruny

<sup>301</sup> Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere*. np.

Island, when Arra-Maida was drawn (see above). It is therefore likely that this portrait is rendered as a composite of two women.

Arra-Maida carries her child on her back, conforming to a trope of female savagery that contrasts powerfully with the Christian iconography of the Madonna, in which the Jesus child is always carried to the front. This is also manifest in the drawing by Piron in 1793 (fig. 39), Webber's portrait in 1777, and John White's portrait of an Algonquian woman.<sup>302</sup> Emphasis on creating a Diemenese type can be seen in the annotation by Péron on Petit's drawing, directing further modification for the engraving,

No. 17 - for simple outline – carefully keep the general shapes, but touch up the essential defects; as the slender shape of the limbs are a characteristic of this race, they must be observed with great care.<sup>303</sup>

In some cases, in which the individual made a favourable impression, negative aspects seem to have been de-emphasised.<sup>304</sup> This was almost certainly another example of the effort made to craft a 'type' for publication. In this way, Péron aimed to illustrate the collective characteristics of the Diemenese, while at the same time, expressing a finer-grained account of the individuality of the people being met with – especially those who were determined as being 'courageous and superior' (fig. 39). By reading the full account by Péron of his visit to Van Diemen's Land, it becomes clear that the initial openness and optimism of the French to finding the perfect 'children of nature', epitomizing the qualities of courage, freedom and natural reasoning that had evolved in their perception of noble savagery on the island, was progressively compromised by a series of conflicts that were absent from d'Entrecasteaux's experience.

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<sup>302</sup> Each of these are likely to have been seen by the subsequent artist, with White's portrait engraved by Theodor de Bry and published in 1590, and Webber's engraved by J. Caldwell, in 1784.

<sup>303</sup> Bonnemains, Forsyth, and Smith (eds.), *Baudin in Australian Waters: The Artwork of the French Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Lands 1800-1804*. p. 154.

<sup>304</sup> Based on a brief examination of material at Le Havre, the watercolour of Arra-Maida showed low-hanging, irregularly-shaped breasts with extended nipples, as described in Péron's journal entry. These aspects are modified in the final engraving to create a depiction of breasts more suited to a 'higher order' savage.

### *The Fall of the Noble Savage*

The French attitude on arrival was complementary, but soon degenerated from its early enthusiasm as relations were tested. There are a number of likely reasons for this, which has yet to be fully explored in existing literature.<sup>305</sup> Firstly, as discussed above, in the thirty years since du Fresne's visit the region had been visited by numerous other Europeans and while there are no records of conflict, the fear of weapons demonstrated repeatedly by Aborigines suggests that this must have occurred. Notably, instances of conflict involving Baudin's crew occurred on Bruny and Maria islands, both of which were regularly visited by European ships. The quality of relations may also have been influenced by the poor morale of the crew members, who were continuing to suffer from the effects of dysentery and malaria during their visit to Van Diemen's Land. It is also clear from the journals, that while Rear Admiral d'Entrecasteaux provided a sound leadership well-respected by his crew, the younger Baudin's leadership was 'authoritarian' and resulted in frequent conflict on board and at one stage, the desertion of forty officers and crew.<sup>306</sup>

Two instances might be seen to reflect poor leadership. The first was reported by Péron and involved a crew member engaging an Aboriginal man in a wrestling match,

M. Maurouard, one of our cadets, wishing to ascertain from his own experience, the degree of strength so generally ascribed to savage nations, had proposed to one among them, who appeared to be the most robust, to wrestle with him; the Diemenese having accepted the challenge, was several times thrown by the young Frenchman, and compelled to acknowledge his inferiority.<sup>307</sup>

Relations for several hours following this event appeared to remain good, until the French were about to leave,

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<sup>305</sup> For example, Dyer makes detailed observations of the difference in reception between the 1773, 1793 and 1803 visits, but does not seek to explain why these were so disparate. Similarly, Jones describes some of the events influencing a change in attitude by Péron, but does not speculate on why such conflicts were absent from the account of the previous French voyage. See Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772-1839*; Jones, 'Images of Natural Man'. pp. 44-46.

<sup>306</sup> Brosse, *Great Voyages of Exploration: The Golden Age of Discovery in the Pacific 1764-1863*. p. 99.

<sup>307</sup> Péron, *Voyage of Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere*. np.



it was impossible to have the smallest suspicion of any change in the sentiments of the savages; when in a moment a long sagaie, thrown from behind the neighbouring rocks, struck M. Maurouard on the shoulder... The boat's crew, provoked at the perfidious and cowardly brutality, would have pursued the savages and punished them as they deserved; but they had already escaped.<sup>308</sup>

Over the next three days, they were attacked again with a shower of stones, and an incident involving the artist Petit caused further conflict,

M. Petit having drawn a representation of several of these savages, the party prepared to return to the ship, when one of the natives sprung on the artist, and attempted to take from him the drawings he had just made: M. Petit resisted, and the furious savage seized a log of wood, with which he would have knocked down our unarmed companion, if the rest had not run to his assistance.<sup>309</sup>

Despite efforts by the French to placate this offence by offering a profusion of gifts, as soon as the French made ready to leave they were again attacked. Over the following days the journal indicates that Aborigines used fire on a number of occasions to try to drive the French away. The souring of relations had an immediate effect on the accounts of a people who had previously complemented for their 'boundless trust and quiet.' The Diemenese were now described in terms of 'the changeableness of character of these ferocious people', who were 'distrustful and perfidious'.<sup>310</sup> The botanist Leschenault de la Tour, who witnessed the wrestling incident, summarised the shift in perspective on the noble savages of Tasmania,

I confess I am surprised that after so many incidents of treachery and cruelty reported the accounts of all the voyages of discovery, reasonable people still say that natural men are not wicked, that one can trust them and that they are only aggressive when provoked to take revenge. Unfortunately, many travellers have fallen victim to these false arguments, and personally I think that one cannot be

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Dyer, *The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians 1772-1839*. p. 128.

too much on guard against men whose character has not been softened by civilisation.<sup>311</sup>

The botanist's comments act to absolve any responsibility on the part of the French for the aggressive responses they received. Instead, the Aborigines were characterized as unpredictable, changeable and inherently 'ferocious'. However, a close reading of the journals reveal a litany of actions on the part of the Baudin's crew that could have been reasonably expected to antagonize. The humiliation of loss in the spontaneous wrestling match, Petit's unwillingness to surrender a portrait sketch, and several instances where crew members fraternized with women while 'their husbands' were absent, are all likely to have contributed to the ill-will that accumulated.<sup>312</sup> These are also events that, perhaps, are unlikely to have occurred under the more mature leadership of Rear Admiral d'Entrecasteaux.

It is not known which of Petit's sketches was responsible for the fracas on Bruny island. However, one *couleur* drawing in the Lesueur Collection at Le Havre is notable in two aspects. The first is a menacing scowl demonstrated on the profile face of the un-named subject. Of the numerous drawings, mostly showing smiling and happy men and women, this man is presented as a picture of discontent. The other feature on this sheet is a lighter image in black pencil. It is of another man. In a skillfully drawn pose, his head is turned slightly away from the viewer with the taunt energy of aggression. His mouth is held in a grimace of anger and his predatory eye is focused with all the threatening violence of the hard savage (fig. 40).

Is this Petit's artifact of the moment of fracture between expedition and their 'good Diemenese'? If the *Couleur 114* sheet does not demonstrate the rupture that occurred between the French and the Aborigines of Bruny Island, then Péron's journal certainly makes his change of heart abundantly clear. His descriptions of women went from

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<sup>311</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>312</sup> This occurred in spite of warnings that the French received from Aboriginal men to keep away from the camps of women and children. See Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines*, 1802. p. 212.

celebrating their 'cheerful dispositions', to disparaging their 'disgusting' bodies, 'lean and shriveled', with hanging breasts and miserable personalities.<sup>313</sup>



Figure 40 - Nicolas-Martin Petit, *Couleur 114*, 1802, drawings, Muséum d'histoire naturelle du Havre.

Considered together, the body of drawings and published engravings, like the published journals of the voyage, results in a contradictory and highly subjective description of Tasmanian Aborigines in terms of their correspondence to the competing themes of noble savagery. In many ways, the ambiguity of representation of Tasmanian Aborigines resulting from the Baudin voyage is emblematic of the competing and conflicting notion of the noble savage in the European mind. These tensions are demonstrated in this chapter to have been at play since the formation of the trope in the late Middle Ages and its crystallization through early contact with peoples of the antipodes. Propelled by fear of the unknown and a religious imprimatur to conquest and economic exploitation, a complex set of themes was called upon to account for a diversity of encounters with equally diverse indigenous nations. Many of these themes – of heroism, courage, freedom and virtue - were drawn from

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<sup>313</sup> Jones, 'Images of Natural Man'. p. 44-5.

Antiquity and easily co-opted as confirmation of imperial power to complemented European national identity, reflecting the romantic virtues of their colonial masters.

At the same time, other themes of savagery persisted in the European vision of the antipodes. These drew on a medieval fear of the unknown, maintaining a picture of the savage as primitive and dangerous. These themes were regularly resorted to whenever native peoples failed to serve the interests of European powers as trading partners, economic resources or military allies.

Despite all of this, the trope of the noble savage persisted into the early nineteenth-century as an idealized symbol of the West's desire to rediscover a Golden Age of virtuous existence beyond the reach of civic corruption and injustice. Ironically, resistance by indigenous people to the imposition of violence and coercion by European powers frequently shifted perceptions of natives from being innocent children of nature to hard, primitive savages possessing little of common interest with Europeans. This usually coincided with an inability to offer economic value, or an active rejection of the subservience expected by European observers.

In Tasmania, successive Dutch, French and British encounters yielded contradictory impressions – of frightening monstrosity and primitive savagery on one hand, and generous nobility on the other. Outbreaks of conflict and death were accounted for by reference to an enduring template of 'miserable savagery'. Yet despite this confusion of experience, articulated in great detail in a wealth of published journals, the visual record is almost uniformly of a noble and innocent people, depicted with reference to classical statuary and expressed with ethnographic richness. This 'optimistic' representation was to a large degree a result of the need to appease the tastes of the European market for illustrated atlases published by navigators and naturalists who visited the island as part of more extensive Pacific voyages.

While there was a place for ignoble savages in these atlases, this niche was filled by populations living in the most inhospitable (and economically unattractive) environments; such as the Fuegians, or people associated with cannibalism and the deaths of navigators. Tasmanians might easily have been placed with these hard savages, except that they lived in a location of strategic importance and of potential

colonial interest to both the French and the British. Their violent resistance to early European incursions was therefore overlooked in the visual record of imperial survey, and they were instead rendered as innocuous place-markers of a future dominion. As we will see in the next chapter, this picture of a mild and inoffensive people quickly proved to be inconsistent with their reaction to the violent British invasion of their island. This led to a virtual erasure of Tasmanian Aborigines from the visual record until, three decades later, the British had concluded a dramatic solution to their resistance.

### Chapter 3 - A Landscape Emptied



Figure 41 - Joseph Lycett, *View of Tasman's Peak, from Macquarie Plains, Van Diemen's Land*, from Lycett (1824).

*For one thing I love Australia: its weird, far-away natural beauty and its remote, almost coal-age pristine quality.*

*The strange, as it were, invisible beauty of Australia, which is undeniably there, but which seems to lurk just beyond the range of our white vision. You feel you can't see - as if your eyes hadn't the vision in them to correspond with the outside landscape. For the landscape is so unimpressive, like a face with little or no features, a dark face. It is so aboriginal, out of our ken, and it hangs back so aloof.*

DH Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, 1922.

## *Exception and Absence*

Australian exceptionalism is often described in terms of social egalitarianism, or the failure of differential social gradients (class), so familiar in nineteenth-century Britain, to become well-established in the Australian colonies.<sup>314</sup> For Geoffrey Blainey, one of the keystones of Australia's exceptional character was 'because it experienced perhaps the most insoluble confrontation of cultures and economies so far recorded in human history.'<sup>315</sup> The idea that 'normal rules do not apply' can be argued to apply even more in the island colony of Van Diemen's Land. If Australia's Antipodean location in a global hemisphere characterized by reversals of latitude, climate, season, and even biology assisted in this, then Tasmania's even greater remoteness exemplified the island as a place without parallel. Similarly, if as Blainey asserts, it was the nature of relations between the British and Aboriginal nations that influenced future expectations of the colonies, I argue that the intensity of conflict with Tasmanian Aborigines generated an even more pointed example of exceptionalism.

In the early part of the nineteenth-century, Van Diemen's Land was already recognized in Europe as a place of brooding strangeness. In his only complete novel, published in 1838, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, Edgar Allan Poe mentions Van Diemen's Land as a remote stopping off point on the way to the South Pole. Here, 'the population occupied themselves chiefly in the collecting of seal skins and sea elephant oil'.<sup>316</sup> The island was literally at the edge of civilisation. Prior to this, Van Diemen's Land was lamented in Irish, Scottish and English folk songs such as *The Black Velvet Band*, *The Braemar Poacher* and the informal anthem of the city of Liverpool, *Maggie Mae* as a place where 'cruel shores' awaited those transported to a place of punishing banishment.

If indeed there is such a thing as Tasmanian exceptionalism, then it is likely to have been born of a reluctance to accept fully the implications of geographic distance from

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<sup>314</sup> William Coleman, 'Puzzling out Australian Exceptionalism', *Quadrant*, June, 2016 (2016).

<sup>315</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, 'Australian Exceptionalism: A Personal View', in William Coleman (ed.), *Only in Australia: The History, Politics, and Economics of Australian Exceptionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). p. 36.

<sup>316</sup> Edgar A. Poe, *Edgar A. Poe: A Biography: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2012). p. 101-2.

England, leading to a belief that the natural state of the island was also English. This might explain why Governor George Arthur, who presided over the escalation of conflict with Aboriginal people during his term as Lieutenant Governor of the colony between 1824 and 1837, chose to avoid signing any treaties, even though he was already familiar with similar instruments that had been put place in Canada since the early 1700s.

With this idea of exceptionalism in mind, I argue in this chapter that the bounded nature of the colony, its extreme remoteness, and its relatively small and insignificant profile in the British Empire; together with a widespread belief that Aboriginal people could be removed from the entire island, led to a popular sentiment and administrative program aimed at employing measures beyond what were expected, or dared to be imagined elsewhere. By examining the beginnings of representation of Aborigines by the colonial artists of Port Jackson, it can be seen how established modes for depiction of Aborigines in the landscape, especially through the aesthetic taste for the picturesque, were developed. However, some of these very same artists failed to record the presence of Aborigines in Tasmanian landscape views. Nor do Aboriginal people appear in the landscapes produced by other artists active in Tasmania – at least not until a critical point had been reached in the colony's development in the early 1830s.

It will be shown in the following pages that between the dates of 1804 and 1832, Tasmanian Aborigines were conspicuously erased from the painted Tasmanian landscape. A range of possible explanations for this absence are considered, raising serious questions about the demands of patrons, and role of artists in adapting the mode of representing Aborigines in landscape painting from what had been established in New South Wales, to the particular requirements of the Tasmanian colony. These requirements reflected the differing patterns of settlement and of conflict with Aborigines between the two colonies; visually presaging a widely desired sentiment in Tasmania. This desire, expressed through popular voice in the colony's newspapers and in the administration of martial law and economic development in the colony, was for Tasmanian Aborigines to disappear. Picturing the subjugation of Indigenous peoples from the path of imperial power is not a process restricted to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As outlined in the



preceding chapter, this is a visual tradition informed and moulded by experience over two centuries before arrival in Australia, as Europeans encountered Indigenous peoples in their quest for riches and power across the central and north Americas. Hand in hand with this, artistic development that occurred alongside European colonial expansion drew on older tropes and traditions, translating the ideas of Antiquity into each new geographical setting, as a necessary prelude to establishing social, cultural and political domain in new lands. While colonial officials took responsibility for the administration of political and economic development, visual and literary artists were encouraged, or directly commissioned to assist in this process. The aim was to make a new colony such as Tasmania recognisable in the great scheme of Western expansion in general, and British imperialism in particular. Most importantly, these depictions occurred in a kind of service to the colonial project. As Janet Wolff points out, ‘art always encodes values and ideology’,<sup>317</sup> offering the student of visual culture an opportunity for critical insight to the cultural and economic forces at work in the social site of its production. Tasmania offered a unique context for this production, which drew on precedents in earlier Australian colonies, but added its own exceptional characteristics.

### *An Anomalous Place*

If certain things were novel or ‘upside down’ in Tasmania, then it was important to account for such anomalies by finding a place for them as extensions of already-familiar narratives. For instance, the Thylacine was described commonly as a ‘zebra-hyena’. David Collins, Deputy Judge Advocate of the fledgling colony at Sydney Cove, referred to the Dingo as ‘of the jackal species; they never bark.’<sup>318</sup> Almost every example of Australian fauna challenged the expectations of European navigators, bureaucrats, scientists and artists. Kangaroos were ‘a very anomalous and extraordinary quadruped,’ the Feather-tailed Glider ‘justly classed as most extraordinary and eccentric’. The Platypus was ‘a subject so extraordinary... a degree of scepticism is not only pardonable, but laudable.’<sup>319</sup> It was natural that the savages

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<sup>317</sup> Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1981). p. 66.

<sup>318</sup> Cited in Penny Olsen, *Upside Down World: Early European Impressions of Australia's Curious Animals* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2010). p. 7.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

co-inhabiting such a surprising land should also be outside the bounds of expectation (fig. 42).



Figure 42 - Heinrich Leutemann, *Australien, Van Diemens-Land*, from *Die Welt in Bildern*, c. 1864. Munchener Bilderbogen.

These observations were energetically received across Europe at a time when rationality and scientific discovery were challenging the dogma of established religion. However, it was not only theological precepts that were available to

question; emergent scientific frameworks were also tested. The sober approach of Linnaean taxonomists, drawing on the Augustinian Chain of Being that required an orderly progression from primitive to advanced, were also confronted by the ‘singular’ and ‘extraordinary’ to be found in the Australian colonies. European scientific methodologies, extended by colonial experience of the Old World, were stretched to breaking point. In Australia, it seemed, anything was possible. François Péron remarked following his brief stay in Sydney,

New Holland defies our conclusions from comparisons, mocks our studies and shakes to their foundations the most firmly established and most universally admitted of our scientific opinions.<sup>320</sup>

Such expectations of exceptional circumstances in Australia had been established much earlier in the British imagination, and immediately applied to the Indigenous people of the continent. William Dampier, on visiting the north-western coastline of Australia in 1699, initiated an understanding of Australian Aborigines that would persist for the next three centuries. Australian Aborigines, observed Dampier, had ‘no Houses and skin garments, Sheep, Poultry and Fruits of the Earth’, as had ‘the great variety of savages’ already encountered.<sup>321</sup> The familiarity of later influential British scientists, such as Sir Joseph Banks, with Dampier’s reports ensured that these early impressions continued to influence British perceptions. Records in the late nineteenth-century by Banks, James Cook and Watkin Tench reinforced the idea that Australian Aborigines were not only unfamiliar with, but incapable of agriculture. Andersen and Perrin sum up the consequence of such a long-held view,

It is in the evident struggle of the colonists to comprehend and to categorize a people who are here ‘represented’ as so extremely ‘savage’ that they are unique that, we suggest, such emphasis upon the Aborigines’ lack of cultivation may be interpreted as something other than the colonists’ anticipation of the ‘lawfulness’ of their appropriation of land that, precisely as uncultivated, could

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Cited in Kaye Andersen and Colin Perrin, ‘How Race Became Everything: Australia and Polygenism’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31/5 (2008). p. 11

be considered as *terra nullius*. As the ‘most barbarous inhabitants on the surface of the globe’, they were... ‘beyond comparison’.<sup>322</sup>

These ideas, evidenced by the observations of highly respected and experienced authorities, created a profound and persistent view that Australian Aborigines could be considered as exceptions to the British experience of other native people in command of their territories. An expectation was established that, rather than being able to exert any influence over nature, Aborigines were entirely at its mercy. This was also suitably convenient for colonists, who were now freed of any complication that proceeded from displacing people involved in recognisable (and therefore legitimate) possession of their territory. It was as though Aborigines had never actually occupied their lands, but were inconvenient and incongruous place-holders in territories awaiting discovery as latently English.

The artist John Glover (1767-1849) was a willing conscript to this cause. In anticipation of his journey to Van Diemen’s Land in 1830, he wrote of his delight in the ‘expectation of finding a beautiful new world – new landscapes, new trees, new flowers, new animals, new birds.’<sup>323</sup> Yet, when he found himself with a grant of land at Mills Plains, in the territory of the Plangermairreenner Aborigines of the Ben Lomond Nation, he defaulted to describing their fire-managed cultural landscape<sup>324</sup> in terms more convenient to his comfort.

Even in a ‘thickly wooded part’ of Mills Plains, he remarked, it was ‘possible almost everywhere to drive a carriage as easily as in a Gentleman’s Park in England.’<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>323</sup> Cited in Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000). p. 90.

<sup>324</sup> See Greg Lehman, 'Turning Back the Clock: Fire, Biodiversity and Indigenous Community Development in Tasmania', in Richard Baker, Jocelyn Davies, and Elspeth Young (eds.), *Working on Country: Indigenous Environmental Management in Australia*, (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>325</sup> Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*. pp 2-3.





Figure 43 - John Glover, *A view of the artist's house and garden in Mills Plains, Van Diemen's Land*, 1835, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of South Australia.

### *Acclimatisation*

One of these processes of familiarisation was 'acclimatisation', which commenced early in the colony's history. From the beginning of the 1820s officers and free-settlers introduced deer, pheasants, partridges, hares and skylarks to the island. Oaks were planted in public places and hawthorn hedgerows began to line the laneways.<sup>326</sup>

Glover's *A view of the artist's house and garden in Mills Plains* (fig. 43) illustrates this process well, detailing his newly-established garden of roses and other familiar European cultivated species.

The English novelist Anthony Trollope was impressed by this quality when he visited in 1872. He observed after his visit, 'the Tasmanians in their loyalty are almost

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<sup>326</sup> Stephan Petrow, 'Tasmanian Acclimatisation Societies', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), np.

English-mad.’<sup>327</sup> Quite simply, wrote Trollope, ‘Everything in Tasmania is more English than is England herself.’<sup>328</sup>

Nevertheless, he observed that ‘it was acknowledged even by all the rival colonies that of all the colonies Tasmania is the prettiest.’ He goes on to perhaps explain why this is so, alluding to the absence of mosquitos, and a climate more pleasant than anywhere else in Australia. ‘Go where you will, the landscape that meets the eye is pleasing, whereas the reverse of this is certainly the rule on the Australian continent.’<sup>329</sup>

Trollope seemed to be troubled by forests. While in Queensland, he observed,

The fault of all Australian scenery is its monotony... One never gets out of the trees, and then it rarely happens that water lends its aid to improve the view... the traveller begins to remember with regret the open charms of some cultivated plain.<sup>330</sup>

When he visited Tasmania, he described it as having ‘by far the greater proportion of the island covered by dense unexplored forests of gum-trees.’<sup>331</sup> However, insight into his affection for the island’s landscape can be found a little further on in his journal where he refers to English fruits ‘which grow certainly more plentiful and ... with greater excellence than they do in England. Cherries were not only bested those from Kent, but of anywhere in the world.’<sup>332</sup>

Trollope’s affection for agriculture and pasture is understandable. The delineation of space that is made by road, fence and hedgerow offered a familiar assurance of order and the promise of productivity, industry and, above all, domesticity. This was

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<sup>327</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand, Vol 2* (Collection of British Authors, 1306; Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1873). p. 199.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid. p. 198.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand, Vol. 1* (Collection of British Authors, 1305; Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1873). p. 80.

<sup>331</sup> Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand, Vol 2*. p. 169.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid. p. 198.

something that could be seen repeated in views by a number of early colonial artists working in the Australian colonies (see, for example, fig. 43).

### *Catastrophe and Rebirth*

Explorer Thomas Mitchell, on viewing western Victoria in 1836, wrote of an 'Australia Felix',

Of this Eden I was the first European to explore its mountains and streams - to behold its scenery - to investigate its geological character - and, by my survey, to develop those natural advantages, certain to become, at no distant date, of vast importance to a new people.<sup>333</sup>

As Mitchell conceived Australia as a place with unrealized potential, he imagined into being a British inheritance. Through his mapping of this 'new' land, Tony Birch describes Mitchell as consummating British possession,

The land that was possessed could literally be held in the hands of the invading colonizers. When Mitchell mapped his 'Australia Felix', a land without a recognisable people or history was given a history – a British history. His maps conceal the presence and histories of the Indigenous people.<sup>334</sup>

Explorers peeled back the landscape's mystery to give way to the colonial imagination, and its capacity to form itself into pastoral familiarity.<sup>335</sup> But it was with an implicit sense of emptiness that the colonies were most readily apprehended – an unstable state inherently available for completion. This sense of emptiness did not relate only to civilisation or *terra nullius*, but to any sensible story of its own. James Erskine Calder expressed this succinctly in the 1840s,

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<sup>333</sup> Tony Birch, 'Nothing Has Changed: The Making and Unmaking of Koori Culture', in Michelle Grossman (ed.), *Black Lines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2003). p. 155.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. p. 155.

<sup>335</sup> For further discussion of the explorer's gaze and the assumed role of objective observer, see Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The country we describe is as yet without a history, without traditions, and indeed without association. Its past is a veritable blank, and we look back into it only to discover that it has nothing to reveal ... there is no such thing as classical soil here.’<sup>336</sup>

The idea that the British had arrived in a place with no history offered opportunities not only for building a new world from scratch, but to also reset the clock. This neatly reflected the popularity in the nineteenth-century for shortened chronologies based on catastrophism.<sup>337</sup> Such a view emerged in the Renaissance and informed the scientific and theological principles influencing Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) approach to landscape. Leonardo’s interest in landscape was not merely as a background to his well-known portraits and religious allegories. He was also an energetic scientist, who interpreted the appearance of geological strata and fossilised shells he found by interrogating Biblical traditions of the Deluge with his own empirical observations.<sup>338</sup> These themes were of essential importance in the depiction of landscapes in many of his key works, illustrating dimensions not only of time, but also of the divine foundations of human existence.

The Deluge was a powerful and persistent metaphor in Christian art throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Neapolitan historian Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) maintained that ‘the Deluge made all prior history unknowable anyway, since it destroyed all documents from which we could write such a history.’<sup>339</sup> Such an epistemological break with humanity’s origins served to refocus attention from what could not be known, to the present processes of history. A beginning firstly entrenched in the mythology of the Garden of Eden was reiterated with the Deluge, just as, with the beginnings of Medieval Studies in the late nineteenth-century, a veil could be drawn on European history at the Barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries.

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<sup>336</sup> Cited in Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). p. 104.

<sup>337</sup> Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>338</sup> Martin Kemp, *Leonardo Da Vinci: Experience, Experiment and Design* (London: V & A, 2006).

<sup>339</sup> Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*. p. 13.





Figure 44 - Unknown, *The First Rain in Paradise from the World Chronicle*, Regensburg, c.1400–1410, parchment, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Such a cycle of renewal suited the colonial project perfectly, creating the aspirational model upon which immigration and free settlement in 1820s Van Diemen's Land could draw. According to Smail, as a device for plotting history, this idea of rupture was continually being emphasised in the Enlightenment imagination 'as it sought to expose the products of human contrivance and replace them with timeless truths embedded in a natural reality.'<sup>340</sup> Sudden transformations were brought about by plagues, revolutions and wars. The combination of the Black War in Van Diemen's Land and a belief in the natural superiority of the British, coupled with nascent scientific theories on the ascent of mankind, cemented the prospect of transition and change for a colony that had to struggle for a foothold in a strange and unco-operative land. Van Diemen's Land was proposed through picturesque representation as a kind of Eden; a new beginning for British settlers. This is elegantly captured in 1824 by Joseph Lycett when he published *Views in Australia*, writing,

In contemplating the progressive effects of Colonization, even slightly as they are sketched in these pages, and exhibited in the following Views, the mind is

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid. p. 14-15.

naturally led into reflections upon the origin and decay of nations. In these infant settlements of Australia we probably behold the germs of a mighty empire, which in future ages will pour forth its myriads to re-people future deserts, in those very regions from which the pabulum of their own existence is at present drawn... What was the state in which the Aborigines of Britain appeared two thousand years ago to Caesar, when Rome's legions first beheld our chalky cliffs? If then such was England... what may not Australia be?<sup>341</sup>

### *An Antique Practice*

For Christian artists of Medieval Europe, painted landscapes initially provided a simple stage for the portrayal of biblical narratives, especially of *Genesis*. Elemental forces of wind and water were central to these early depictions (fig. 44) and dominated approaches to landscape painting through the Renaissance to the present day. Miniature landscapes in illuminated manuscripts were well established early in the fourteenth-century. By the beginning of the fifteenth-century, illuminations by Franco-Flemish artists (fig. 45) were offering landscapes stylistically recognisable as progenitors of the scenes that would be emulated by the studios of Leonardo's Florence.

Antique writers read by Florentine humanists underpinned the development of landscape in Renaissance Italy. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, whose treatise on architecture was one of the most influential in the Renaissance, described the Roman fashion for decorating the walls of villas,

Then they started ... to depict scenic backdrops in open spaces, such as exedrae, thanks to the largeness of their walls ... and to decorate galleries, because of their extended length, with varieties of landscape decorations (topiorum), finding subjects in the characteristics of particular places; for they paint harbours, headlands, shores, rivers, springs, straits, temples, groves, hills, cattle,

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<sup>341</sup> Joseph Lycett, *Views in Australia or New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land Delineated, in Fifty Views, with Descriptive Letter Prefs.* (facimile edn.; Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1971). pp. 14-15.

shepherds... and all the other decorative elements that have been created by nature. (Vitruvius *De Architectura* VII, 5, 2).<sup>342</sup>



Figure 45 - Master of the Book of Hours of Maréchal de Boucicaut, *Untitled*, 1405-08, parchment, Musée Jacquemart-André.

Pliny had included such descriptions in his *Natural History*. Most surviving examples of painted landscape from this period trace their origins to Alexandria and the third-century BCE. Here it thrived as a pastoral tradition, influenced by the gardens of the Orient, a product of an urban culture without which there would be no need for landscape depiction.<sup>343</sup>

Alexandrian landscape was marked by a combination of natural elements that were 'domesticated' through a systematisation of perspective.<sup>344</sup> This became available in early fifteenth-century Italy through the rediscovery of the cartographic projections of Ptolemy, enabling the development of mathematical linear perspective in

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<sup>342</sup> Cited in Veronica Della Dora, 'Topia: Landscape before Linear Perspective', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103/3 (2012). p. 6.

<sup>343</sup> Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London: Paul Elek, 1973). p. 13-14.

<sup>344</sup> Della Dora, 'Topia: Landscape before Linear Perspective'. p. 4.

Brunelleschi's architecture, which was then promulgated to painters by architect and writer Leon Battista Alberti.<sup>345</sup>

### *The Measure of Landscape*

Understanding the Antique influence on Italian Renaissance landscape is critical to accounting for its development in the academic traditions of eighteenth-century France and Britain. Academic landscape painting required an understanding of the spatial hierarchy established by Ptolemy, differentiating between the quantitative (mathematical) tradition of geography, and qualitative *chorography*, which was concerned with the detailed forms of a region. Ptolemy, according to Luckermann,<sup>346</sup> defined *chorography*,

by describing a feature in terms of its contacting or environing features, (he) is describing the feature by giving it place. To describe the place of a thing is to mark it off by identifying the things that bound it... the integral place of all parts of a given whole.

*Chorography*, said Ptolemy, 'deals, for the most part, with the nature, rather than the size of the lands... no-one can be a chorographer unless he is skilled in drawing.'<sup>347</sup>

Leonardo's *Study of a Tuscan Landscape*, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1473, is considered 'the first dated landscape study in the history of Western Art'.<sup>348</sup> The drawing describes a river's passage through a valley, its source in jagged pinnacles, and its destination of a lake or sea (fig. 46). In his study, we see origins of the templates of European aesthetics so readily employed by the earliest Australian colonial artists. However, it was an essential task of these artists, concerned as they were in presenting their work as valuable asset for promoting the success of the colony of New South Wales, to do more than create pleasing and familiar views.

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<sup>345</sup> Martin Kemp, *Leonardo Da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). p. 10.

<sup>346</sup> Fred Luckermann, 'The Concept of Location in Classical Geography', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, (1961). pp. 194-96.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. pp. 194-96.

<sup>348</sup> Kemp, *Leonardo Da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man*. p. 30.

Gombrich argues that Leonardo's early work demonstrates sufficient evidence that he was a student of Northern painting, in particular their mastery of landscape.<sup>349</sup>



Figure 46 - Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of a Tuscan Landscape*, 5th August 1473, pen and ink on paper, Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi.

However, Gombrich also emphasizes the reciprocity of this relationship. Italians looked at work commissioned or purchased from the Low Countries, while Northern artists ventured across the Alps to gain better understandings of classical tradition and form,

Like two languages, which exchange loan words while each retains its separate structure and vocabulary, the traditions of Italian and Northern art never merged to the point of extinction.<sup>350</sup>

Leonardo's fluency with Netherlandish realism and the philosophy of Antiquity exemplifies how Italian artists at the time were seeing examples from Northern artists and transforming these in accord with Pliny's *Natural History*, taking their depictions

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<sup>349</sup> Ernst Gombrich, 'Light, Form and Texture in Fifteenth-Century Painting North and South of the Alps', *The Heritage of Apelles* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976). p. 33.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

into a more ideal form.<sup>351</sup> Building on the work of artists such as Van Eyck, the influence of Leonardo and his contemporaries spread back across the Alps to influence the first independent landscapes produced by Albrecht Altdorfer.

Christopher Wood argues that by visually steering the Christian beholder through the landscape, these works together reminded the beholder that life is a pilgrimage. 'The Christian will is stifled by the cyclical rhythms of the cosmos; there is no possibility of striking out at cross-purposes with such a landscape.'<sup>352</sup> The popularity of landscapes in Western Europe attests to their religious appeal beyond the decorative. Landscape *genre* scenes proliferated in seventeenth-century Europe to the extent that there was 'not a cobbler's house without (one)'.<sup>353</sup> From simple decorative scenes in common domestic settings, through to the allegorical miniatures of illuminated manuscripts, and grand church frescos, the ever-presence of *topioria* provided a motivational constant through millennia of Western cultural growth. In the context of colonial Australia, this motivation translated into a call to occupy and develop as an unquestionable imperative.

### *Colonial Vision*

Ernst Gombrich's argument for the myth of 'the innocent eye'<sup>354</sup> is useful in assisting our understanding of the deployment of landscape painting in promoting imperial growth. Colonial landscape views played to 'the dynamic relationship between what the beholder can 'really see' as distinct from what (they) know to be there'<sup>355</sup> to thrill those who viewed these works; tantalizing with the possibilities available for pastoral development. For the actor on such a stage, as for the beholder, there was no room for the arbitrary. The landscape inferred a purposeful life. For the Christian this meant moral improvement. For the colonist, it was a reassurance of potential for economic and social success.

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<sup>351</sup> Kemp, *Leonardo Da Vinci: The Marvelous Works of Nature and Man*. p. 15.

<sup>352</sup> Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (London: Reaktion, 1993). p. 35

<sup>353</sup> Ernst Gombrich, 'The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape', *Norm and Form* (London: Phaidon, 1966). p. 110.

<sup>354</sup> Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. (New York: Phaidon, 1960). p. 254.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.* p. 245.

Renaissance patrons and artists of the sixteenth-century, drawing on the common language of Antiquity, interposed their Northern and Italian styles, exchanged ideas and generated increasingly complex and sophisticated ways of imagining how the world might respond to these purposes. However, colonists and Aborigines shared none of this capacity for dialogue. Instead, the original occupants were assumed to be non-conversant in such matters and of little worth – despite having their own rich visual culture of representation of country.<sup>356</sup> Combining the Christian impulse for pilgrimage toward improvement with the colonial impulse for development easily justified emptying new territories of Aboriginal people, and negated any suggestion that their presence might have either value or cause to persist.

With this history in mind, it can be understood that colonial landscape painters were active at many levels. They continued the tradition of the Roman *toporium*, crafting recognisable places from the assemblages of nature that were particular to a location. Together, these painters served the task of chorographer, documenting the features and character of a region to create identity in a landscape entirely novel to the viewer. Far from being merely a technical skill, as Ptolemy pointed out, their persuasive ability in drawing was essential to their success in creating a convincing scene that evoked a real and desirable location.

Early Australian landscape painters were place-makers in an unfamiliar land; helping, as Bernard Smith explained, to ‘stimulate European thought concerning man and nature in both art and science.’<sup>357</sup> Through the publication of their work as engravings, the metropol was able to define itself in cogent contrast to its expanding fringe by challenging techniques and perceptions, and by naming and claiming new domains. At the same time, colonial landscape artists were also practitioners of Christian traditions, drawing on deep roots in Antiquity that urged the beholder to advance with a theological determination that neatly intersected with the colonial project of their patrons. To be viable in an empire built on extraction of resources from its colonies, this meant the settler population had to occupy and domesticate the

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<sup>356</sup> See, for example, ‘The Art of Place and Journey’, in Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*.

<sup>357</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 7.



Australian landscape. For Aborigines, the consequence was displacement from their ancestral homes.

### *(Dis)placing Aborigines in the Picturesque*

Paul Carter argues that the picturesque aesthetic is inherently involved in the appropriation of land.

‘The picturesque...is thoroughly entwined with notions of nature’s use-value and the need to appropriate this wealth. Indeed the language of scientific and picturesque study is a language of appropriation.’<sup>358</sup>



Figure 47 - Thomas Watling, North-West View taken from the Rocks above Sydney in New-South-Wales, for John White, Esqr, c. 1793-5, drawing, State Library of New South Wales.

<sup>358</sup> Paul Carter, *Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber Press, 1987). p. 287. Cited in Paul Miller, 'Monotony and the Picturesque: Landscape in Three Australian Travel Narratives of the 1830s', in Jennifer McDonnell and Michael Deves (eds.), *Land and Identity: Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Conference* (University of New England, Armadale: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 1997), 52-57. p. 52.



Colonial landscape painters acted in the same way as map-makers, rendering a landscape familiar and recognisable to European frameworks of understanding and of use. 'The picturesque landscape, says Paul Miller, 'appears as a culturally constructed aesthetic. It is a landscape to which a cultural identity is applied.' The role of Aborigines in this re-enculturated landscape needed to be closely-defined, serving the particular needs of patrons and viewers of the resulting images.

The beginnings of the picturesque in Australia (fig. 47) can be seen in the work of Thomas Watling (1762-?) during the 1790s.<sup>359</sup> However, the application of what might be described as picturesque style varied considerably. According to Bernard Smith, John Lewin was the first to depict the Australian landscape 'with an eye unfettered by the aesthetics of the picturesque'.<sup>360</sup> Just a short time later, Joseph Lycett subtitled his 1824 publication 'Picturesque Views' in an appeal to the increasingly popular reception of this approach. Skinner Prout's Tasmanian work, some twenty years on, was the result of what the artist described in his publication of later lithographs, as a 'picturesque tour' of Van Diemen's Land. Like Glover, he repeatedly employed Aborigines with Arcadian effect to evoke sentiment in the absence of monument or 'places hallowed by historical association' so often employed for the purpose in European picturesque tradition.<sup>361</sup>

David Hansen describes the picturesque as 'constituting an index of taste (as nature and culture) that was to last for almost a century,'<sup>362</sup> and made popular by the widespread publication of engravings by Claude Lorraine (1604/5-1682), Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), and Gaspar Dughet (1617-1675). The theory of this aesthetic was drenched in passions, according to Hansen, of self-preservation, the sublime and the pastoral, with the picturesque positioned somewhere between the sublime and the beautiful.<sup>363</sup> The style was particularly suitable to colonial artists presenting views of new territories, as it easily engendered an emotion response from a willing public;

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<sup>359</sup> Michael Organ, 'Conrad Martens and the Picturesque: Precursor to Australian Impressionism', (University of Wollongong, 1993). p. 13.

<sup>360</sup> Bernard Smith, *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia. The Colonial Period 1770-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Cited in Organ, 'Conrad Martens and the Picturesque: Precursor to Australian Impressionism'.

<sup>361</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 295.

<sup>362</sup> Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover'. p. 26.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

stimulated by wildness and unpredictability. The exceptional nature of the Australian colonies provided perfect subject material. Against this ‘sensory-emotional method’, Hansen also points to a common systematisation of the aesthetic, with ‘fore-grounds, distances and second distances – side screens and perspectives – lights and shades’, that have been enthusiastically embraced by commentators on Australian colonial landscapes to the present day. These layers offered a device to adapt views of the countryside, decided on by, ‘its capability of being formed into pictures, with all the eagerness of real taste.’<sup>364</sup> This picturesque approach, which we will see was employed throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century in the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, offered a convenient rhetorical place for Aborigines in a visual narrative that sought to relegate them as a preceding moment in an inevitable process of colonial progress.

Most picturesque views were made in watercolour at a time when oil painting was rare in Australia. John Lewin created the first known oil painting in the Australian colonies. *Fish catch and Dawes Point* (c. 1817) is a complex picture describing the diversity of fish available to the settlers, against a background of their source, Sydney Harbour. However, this was not Lewin’s first work in oil. Another, produced around 1810, was an ‘ambitious allegorical work about the civilising impact of Christianity on Aboriginal people’.<sup>365</sup> It measured 13 x 18 ft and was displayed by Macquarie in Government House. Now lost, the large allegorical work was probably preceded by the production of the only two surviving Aboriginal portraits by the artist. These may have been developed as studies for the larger oil.

As Richard Neville notes, following the ‘flurry of documentation’ of Aborigines commissioned by John White and David Collins in the 1790s for the Port Jackson Painters and Thomas Watling, few images of Aboriginal people were produced by any colonial artist between 1800 and the late 1820s.<sup>366</sup> Neville points to this as an

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid. p. 28. For discussion of the origin of Hansen’s quote in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, see Rosallind Kraus, ‘The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition’, *October*, 18 (1981).

<sup>365</sup> State Library of New South Wales, ‘About John Lewin: Painting in Oil’, <[http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/events/exhibitions/2012/lewin/about\\_lewin.html](http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/archive/events/exhibitions/2012/lewin/about_lewin.html)>.

<sup>366</sup> Richard Neville, *Mr J W Lewin: Painter and Naturalist* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2012). p161

indication of a ‘reduction of interaction between the two cultures’, or at least a period of unremarkable relations that resulted in Aborigines being ‘removed to the margins of colonial paintings’<sup>367</sup>, reduced to providing a ‘locality to the land’<sup>368</sup> and a reminder of their domestication.

However, despite this reduction of interest in painting Aborigines in the Sydney colony, the few depictions that were produced are of essential importance in understanding the development of patterns and practices that were likely to have influenced the visual representation of Aborigines in Van Diemen’s Land.



Figure 48 - John Lewin, *Sydney Cove*, 1808, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales.

Lewin’s 1808 topographic view *Sydney Cove* (fig. 48) is an exemplary study in the use of Aboriginal figures in extolling the success of colonization. The extent of the colony is impressive and contrasts with a naked Aboriginal figure carrying a spear and placed just off-centre in his regarding of a large, three-masted vessel hauled up on the shore for careering. The primitiveness of the original inhabitants is emphasised by two more Aboriginal figures in a canoe; dwarfed by the bulk of the ship. A similar theme, together with the idea of amiable co-existence, is further established by *Town of Sydney* (1812). This view uses the same device, but this time with multiple

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> cited by Neville (ibid.): Barron Field, *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales* (London: John Murray, 1825). p. 435.

Aboriginal canoes, contrasting with the many large British vessels in a busy port scene. The Aborigines seem content to practice their daily pursuits, fishing from the shore and carrying lighted fires in their canoes. It is the epitome of a successful and happy colony. George Evans mirrors this composition, with Aboriginal figures in the foreground-centre of his *Sydney Cove, West Side* (1810) (fig. 49).



Figure 49 - G. W. Evans, *Sydney Cove, West Side*, 1810, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales

### *Beginnings of Absence - John Lewin*

When Lieutenant Governor William Paterson (1775-1810) returned to Sydney from Van Diemen's Land in 1809 to replace William Bligh, he asked Lewin to make copies of a series of drawings and watercolours by the Tasmanian surveyor George Prideaux Robert Harris (1755-1810). Paterson was an enthusiastic natural historian, and these views were part of an assemblage of landscapes and natural history illustrations that may have been intended for publication on his return to England. They served as a document not only of the qualities of the new settlement of Port Dalrymple, but also of Paterson's success in 'creating productiveness and potential in the new colony.'<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Neville, *Mr J W Lewin: Painter and Naturalist*. p. 148.

His drawings of *A View of Colonel Paterson's Garden Yorkton* (1808) (see fig.50), together with *York Town Port Dalrymple* (1808), found in the same volume of watercolours held in the Mitchell Library, illustrates Paterson's assertion that the district was 'one of the most beautiful countries in the world'.<sup>370</sup> *Paterson's Garden* substantiates this by showing 'the settlement's rapid domesticity tamed by art and design'.<sup>371</sup>



Figure 50 - John Lewin, *A view of Colonel Paterson's garden, Yorkton Port Dalrymple*, 1809, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales.

This achievement is further emphasised in the painting *A Bengal cow and her calf English cross one year old*, (fig. 51), demonstrating the productivity and fine breeding so symbolic of imperial industry. It would not be expected that either *Paterson's Garden*, or *Bengal Cow* would include a Tasmanian Aborigine. This juxtaposition was inconceivable, given that it was the need for land to graze such beasts that necessitated the removal of Aborigines, not to mention that Aborigines were known to spear cattle and sheep in their resistance to British invasion. Instead, *Bengal Cow* might be seen as a symbol of the displacement of Tasmanian Aborigines. Similarly, the fences, roads and other signs of agricultural domesticity in *Paterson's Garden*

<sup>370</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.



also excluded Aborigines, as their presence so close to a homestead would constitute a threatening element in an otherwise reassuring composition. The inclusion of livestock, fences, roads, homesteads and pastoral workers were therefore a presence in these picturesque views that was the concomitant of Aboriginal absence.



Figure 51 - John Lewin, *A Bengal cow and her calf English cross one year old*, 1809, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales.

Several of Lewin's Tasmanian landscapes: *Near Launceston, Port Dalrymple*; *The Cataract near Launceston, Port Dalrymple*; and *The second Cataract on the North Esk near Launceston* (all 1809) include Europeans engaged in activities such as fishing and boating. Of these views, one compares closely with an earlier watercolour by Evans: *A View near Grose Head, New South Wales*, (fig. 52). This painting was owned by Paterson, and probably seen by Lewin.<sup>372</sup> Both views freely utilise common European criteria of the picturesque and sublime to engage with elements of the Australian wilds. Evans does this not only through the dramatic topographical features of the landscape, but also by placing Aborigines (one holding a long spear) in silhouette against the foaming rapids.

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

Lewin's remarkably similar *Second Cataract* version of this view repeats many of the compositional and dynamic elements, but pointedly chooses Europeans with long fishing poles instead. The effect is to diminish the sense of wildness. As we shall explore further in this chapter, the replacement of Tasmanian Aborigines in the landscape is likely to be for more profound reasons than to simply emphasise the 'pleasure' to be obtained in a Van Diemen's Land view.



Figure 52 - G. W. Evans, *A view near Grose Head, New South Wales*, 1809, watercolour (left); John Lewin, *The second Cataract on the North Esk near Launceston, Port Dalrymple*, 1809, watercolour (right); with corresponding details (below).  
State Library of New South Wales.

### *A Pattern of Exclusion*

Evans too seems to fall in with this pattern of exclusion in his Tasmanian views, but this time in comparable topographic works. His *View of east side of Sydney Cove* (c. 1803), places both Aborigines and Europeans in the same manner employed by he and Lewin in their Sydney views; together in a scene of amity against the background of a bustling harbour and a thriving town. However, this contrasts sharply with Evans' later picture of *Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land* (1828), which instead of a foreground of Aborigines, features numerous settlers engaged in building and fishing

(fig. 53). There are fires indicated by smoke rising from the forest behind the town, but unlike the presence of smoke in early maritime views of coastline that might indicate Aboriginal activity, the overall effect is to add to the scene of industry. It may be that the absence of Aborigines in Evans' and Lewin's Van Diemen's Land scenes was co-incidental. However, it seems more likely that there was a desire on the part of Paterson in commissioning these artists to focus more deliberately on the domestication of Van Diemen's Land scenes. This was easily achieved by simply removing reminders of Aborigines completely.



Figure 53 - G. W. Evans, *View of the east side of Sydney Cove*, c. 1803, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales (top); *Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land*, 1828, engraving, National Gallery of Australia (bottom).



An alternative to this possibility is that the artists were simply depicting what they saw; and there were no Aborigines to be seen in Port Dalrymple or Hobart Town. However, a brief survey of colonial histories confirms Aborigines as a significant part of the experience of settlers in Van Diemen's Land. At Port Dalrymple this contact began from the earliest times,<sup>373</sup> with encounters in the locality of the Cataract continuing up until at least the mid 1820s.<sup>374</sup> Similarly, Aborigines were regular visitors to Hobart Town over this period, often camping close to, or within the town.<sup>375</sup> These people became known as the 'Tame Mob', and numbered between twenty and thirty men, women and children.<sup>376</sup> In 1824, at the time of the publication of Lycett's *Views of Australia*, Boyce notes that a large group of over sixty Aborigines visited Hobart and camped on the outskirts of town.<sup>377</sup>

This author provides multiple examples of Aboriginal people forming relationships, often based on settlers providing them with flour, bread or other provisions, up until the mid 1820s. It was only after this time that settlers began to insist on exclusive enjoyment of their land grants and started to try to drive Aborigines away – no doubt a critical point in escalation of conflict that ultimately culminated in the declaration of martial law in the colony. Boyce suggests that after an initial period of displacement and aggression toward Tasmanian Aborigines, violence had abated by 1808.<sup>378</sup>

James Bonwick describes several examples from the period between 1814 and 1822 of a colony in which it was possible to travel through the bush in 'perfect security'.<sup>379</sup> Frequent peaceful contact is evident from a number of accounts by Bonwick of groups of up to one hundred Aborigines visiting farms near Hobart, assisting with harvest, visiting town and enjoying the hospitality of Governor William Sorell in the

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<sup>373</sup> Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race*. p. 23

<sup>374</sup> Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*. p. 135

<sup>375</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 67.

<sup>376</sup> Murray Johnson and Ian Macfarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2015). p. 109.

<sup>377</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. pp. 186-87.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

<sup>379</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 43.

‘government paddock’ now known as the Queen’s Domain.<sup>380</sup> Yet, Aborigines in Van Diemen’s Land are conspicuously absent from views of Hobart until 1834.<sup>381</sup>

One of the earliest known paintings of European settlement in Van Diemen’s Land is a view of Sullivan Cove 1804, thought to be by Evans (see fig. 54). This scene shows the beginnings of a camp on Hunter Island, with two groups of tents as the only signs of land-based facilities, and a team of men working with a hand drawn cart. A ship and longboat stand at anchor nearby. A small flock of gulls is the only sign of local inhabitants.



Figure 54 - G. W. Evans (unsigned), *View of Sullivan’s Cove*, 1804, watercolour, State Library of New South Wales.

The importance, as Neville points out, of landscape studies so commonly produced at this early time in the colony’s history was to fold landscapes that were admired by those responsible for the success of colonial development into a European aesthetic template that would be easily read by cultured people. ‘A landscape that could so easily be turned into a picture was also proof of its value.’<sup>382</sup> Decisions on whether or

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid. pp. 45-5.

<sup>381</sup> The earliest landscape views of Hobart created in Van Diemen’s Land to include Aborigines found in this study are John Glover’s *Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point* (1834), and W. B. Gould’s *River Scene with Aborigines* (1838); see Chapter 4.

<sup>382</sup> Neville, *Mr J W Lewin: Painter and Naturalist*. p. 178.

not to place Aborigines in such pictures were almost certainly made with intention. Such inclusions had to serve a purpose as picturesque additions that enhanced the pleasing nature of the view. This was best achieved if they functioned as place-markers, at the same time evincing their own pacification and domesticity. So why did Lewin and Evans not employ this device in Van Diemen's Land? The rocks in the foreground of *View of Sullivan's Cove* are perfectly suited to the picturesque orthodoxy practiced by this artist in his Sydney views of the time.

Lewin produced many New South Wales views without Aborigines. These were either distant views of wild grandeur, such as *Pitt's Amphitheatre* and *Evans Peak* (c. 1815-16) from his journey into the Blue Mountains, or scenes of agricultural industry and architecture, where the focus was intended to be on economic potential. In these instances, Aborigines were probably considered unnecessary to the aesthetic template, or perhaps inconsistent. Wherever Aboriginal figures were included by Lewin (most frequently in views of Sydney Town), the narrative seemed to be one of contrast to the topographical account of colonial industry. Why then did Lewin not use Aboriginal figures for the same purpose in his views of Van Diemen's Land?

As already discussed, we might not expect Aborigines to feature in more intimate illustrations of agricultural progress, or but where the established picturesque template did provide for inclusion of Aborigines, both artists chose European staffage for every one of their known views of Van Diemen's Land. Without evidence in the form of correspondence on the matter from Paterson, it can only be concluded that this was either a result of direct instructions from Paterson, or perhaps an informal consensus particular to the Tasmanian colonies. As we will see further in this chapter, evidence informing a view on this matter, while diffuse, seems to point to the latter.

### *Showing the World*

Picturesque views reached their most extravagant form during the early nineteenth-century in the production of multiple views or panoramas. Perhaps the best known of these in Australia is by Major James Taylor (1785-1829). *Panoramic Views of Port Jackson* (see fig. 55) is an early example of a template repeated by other artists across

the colonies. And like the single picturesque views discussed above, this was a template with a ready place for Aborigines.

Several panoramas of Hobart Town were produced in the early nineteenth-century, including known versions by Evans, Lycett, Francis Guillemard Simpkinson de Wesselow (1819-1906) and Benjamin Duterrau.

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Figure 55 - James Taylor, *Panoramic Views of Port Jackson*, c. 1821, engraving, State Library of New South Wales (series arranged clockwise from top left, with right hand view enlarged to show Aborigines).

Yet, none of these works include Aborigines. This is especially curious in the case of Simpkinson, who completed several studies of Tasmanian Aborigines, and Duterrau who is perhaps best known for his paintings and engravings of Tasmanian Aborigines (see Chapter 4).

The exhibition *Panoramic Views*, presented by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 2015-16, offered visitors a sample from three centuries of mostly colonial works held by the institution. Amongst the twenty views of Hobart or its environs, all produced from 1826 to 1895, none included Aborigines,<sup>383</sup> although one was eventually to prove an exception. With examples from across the British Empire, the exhibition incorporated a view of Mauritius by Augustus Earle (1793-1838). Earle also completed a *Panorama of Hobart Town* (c. 1825) that is held in the Dixon Gallery of the SLNSW (fig. X). While this work is consistent with the corpus of Tasmanian views that reject Aborigines from the picturesque composition, a later copy of Earle's panorama is quite different.

Augustus Earle frequently painted Aboriginal people, either as picturesque additions to his landscapes, such as *Two men in a canoe with a fire aboard in Port Jackson New South Wales*, (c. 1825) or as subjects; such as *A view in Parramatta N. S. Wales looking East* (1825-28), in which an Aboriginal man and woman with an infant are camped next to a public pathway, being gestured to move on by an official in a red coat. This and other paintings alluding to the social relations between Aborigines and authorities comprise six of eleven pictures in the collection of watercolours in the volume *Views of N. S. Wales* held by the Mitchell Collection of the SLNSW. Earle's interest in Aboriginal subjects is also highlighted by his much-reproduced portraits of *Bungaree* (c. 1830).

Augustus Earle's clear interest in exotic subjects is not surprising from an artist who had spent the period immediately prior to arriving in Van Diemen's Land in South America, where he painted *Gate of Pernambuco, in Brazil, with New Negroes* (1821), demonstrating his attention to the subject of emancipation. This painting, illustrating the decision to provide housing to slaves due to civil unrest, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1824.<sup>384</sup> In fact, the artist's body of work produced immediately prior to his arrival in Hobart typically featured studies of individuals and slave

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<sup>383</sup> Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 'Panoramic Views', *on line edition* (Hobart: TMAG, 2015).

<sup>384</sup> Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists : Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* pp. 234-5.

culture, and suggest an appetite by the artist for exotic subjects and an interest in diverse and marginal peoples. Yet, after four months spent in Van Diemen's Land, not one of his paintings included a Tasmanian Aborigine. This is despite the confirmed presence of Aborigines around Hobart at the time, including the large group of sixty visiting the governor just large groups visiting the governor in November, 1824, just two months before Earle's arrival in the town.<sup>385</sup> After leaving Hobart, Earle established himself in Sydney and continued his travelling, painting places and indigenous people in his travels around the colony, and later across the Pacific and into southeast Asia and India. During his time in New Zealand, he created numerous studies of Maori. It remains curious then, that his stay in Hobart should mark a period during which he seems to abandon this interest, especially as conflict between settlers and Aborigines was increasing significantly at the time.

Was it not possible to obtain Aboriginal subjects for his compositions while in Van Diemen's Land, or was he discouraged from this interest? Earle's painting 'Cluny Park, Van Diemen's Land' (c. 1825), is identified with a note on the verso 'The general appearance of the country in its natural state/perfect Park scenery.'<sup>386</sup> It is difficult to not be intrigued by the apparent continuation of the practice of Lewin and Evans, emphasising the advanced civility and suitability for settlement of Van Diemen's Land, and excluding reference to Aborigines. Earle was in Hobart Town from January to May 1825, during which time he is thought to have completed his panorama. Aboriginal people were at that time visiting Hobart Town in large numbers.<sup>387</sup>

Earle's *Panorama of Hobart* featured a number of distant colonists attending to a battery and even further away, as figures on the streets (fig. 56). The only figures in the foreground are two men at semaphore masts. If this was a formula considered suitable by those advising the artist in Hobart, it proved not to be the case for

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<sup>385</sup> Earle arrived in Hobart on 18 January 1825 and departed for Sydney 14 May, 1825. See Jocelyn Hackforth Jones, *Augustus Earle: Travel Artist* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1980). p. 148.

<sup>386</sup> Hendrik Kolenberg and Julianna Kolenberg, *Tasmanian Vision: The Art of Nineteenth Century Tasmania: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture from European Exploration and Settlement to 1900* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1987). p. 64.

<sup>387</sup> Boyce notes a visit by over 60 Aborigines to Hobart in November 1824, where they were entertained by the Governor, Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 186.



promoters of art at the metropolitan heart of the empire. Four years after Earl completed his panorama, Robert Burford (1791-1861) created a large-scale version of the work for exhibition in London. The original no longer exists, but a guide to the exhibition on the Strand was published in 1831.

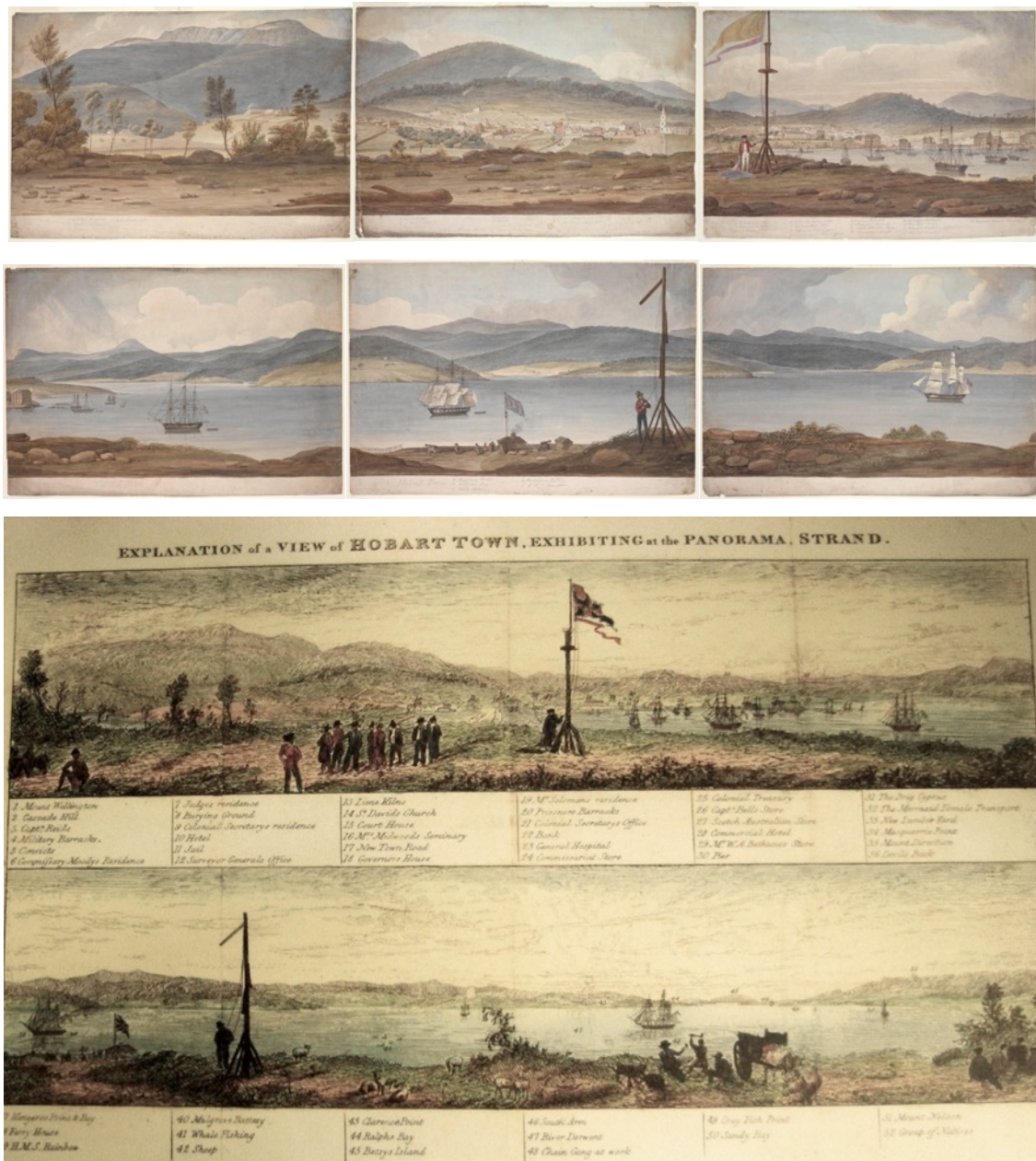


Figure 56 - Augustus Earle, *Panorama of Hobart*, c. 1825, series of watercolour drawings, State Library of New South Wales (above); Robert Burford, *Explanation of a View of Hobart Town, Exhibiting at the Panorama, Strand*, 1831, hand coloured engraving, Special and Rare Books Collection, University of Tasmania (below).

This engraving (see fig. 56) shows that Burford had embellished the picture. Joan Kerr notes, 'Burford's artists added local colour such as a chain gang and convict

group to Earle's Arcadian view of this sedate British outpost.<sup>388</sup> However, Kerr fails to note the significant addition of groups of figures unambiguously intended to represent Aborigines seated at far left and right (see fig. 57). The group at right is clearly identified in the published key to the exhibition as a 'Group of Natives'.<sup>389</sup> It seems that Kerr had not noticed their absence in the original Earle drawing, and had therefore not realized the significance of this addition.



Figure 57 - Robert Burford, *Explanation of a View of Hobart Town, Exhibiting at the Panorama, Strand*, 1831, hand coloured engraving after Earl (detail). Special and Rare Books Collection, University of Tasmania (left).

Burford probably specified the addition of Aborigines to the Tasmanian panorama as a result of reproducing an earlier panorama of Sydney Town by James Taylor.<sup>390</sup> This work included Aborigines and was presented by Burford and Henry Barker at their Leicester Square Panorama in 1821. The Tasmanian Aboriginal figures are the only known examples appearing in a nineteenth-century panoramic view of any scale, and have been added to the scene in a location precisely consistent with the template established by Taylor (fig. 55).

<sup>388</sup> Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists : Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* p. 234.

<sup>389</sup> Another group of Aborigines, and a lone figure sitting close by appears at far left, although these are not identified in the key.

<sup>390</sup> Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists : Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* p. 780.



## *A Screen Debut*

Panoramas of exotic cities were a great public success in London during the early nineteenth-century, and the engraving was sold at Burford's exhibition on The Strand as a key to the views he was offering. This form of panorama was patented in 1787 by Robert Barker (1739-1806), an Irish portraitist based in Edinburgh. Barker's innovation was to construct a means of placing the viewer in the centre of a circular canvas, tightly controlling the perspective to ensure that multiple viewpoints were consistent in perspective.<sup>391</sup> Manipulation of the relationship between the viewer and the picture included restricting how close the canvas could be approached, locating an overhead lighting source hidden by a canopy and positioning a viewing platform exactly half way up the canvas. According to Lily Ford 'Barker wasn't taking the picture out of the frame, he was making the frame big enough to include the spectator as well.'<sup>392</sup>

Barker's belief in the creative integrity of his spectacle was shared by Benjamin West, who pronounced it as 'the greatest improvement in the history of painting'.<sup>393</sup> Joshua Reynolds initially rejected the idea, suggesting that Barker give it up, but having experienced the exhibition for himself remarked that the exhibition 'represent(ed) nature in a manner far superior to the limited scale of pictures in general'.<sup>394</sup> Public enthusiasm followed convincingly. Panoramas began to displace the exhibition of monumental paintings such as Géricault's 'Raft of Medusa', and James Ward's gigantic 'Allegory of Waterloo', which had been installed in Piccadilly's Egyptian Hall prior to its exhibition of panoramas from 1825.<sup>395</sup> These shows were highly successful and their replacement by the panoramas attests to the popularity of this new medium. The panoramic exhibition had usurped the epic history painting as the most dramatic and engaging form of painting, and Burford had unwittingly given Tasmanian Aborigines their first appearance on such a momentous canvas.

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<sup>391</sup> Lily Ford, 'Unlimiting the Bounds: The Panorama and the Balloon View', *The Public Domain Review* (Cambridge: The Open Knowledge Foundation, n.d.).

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> John Martin and Ian Christie, 'Kings of the Vast', *Tate Etc*, 23 (2011). n.p.

<sup>394</sup> Samuel Carter Hall, 'The Panorama: Memoirs of Its Inventor, Robert Barker, and His Son, the Late Henry Aston Barker', *The Art Journal*, 3 (1857).

<sup>395</sup> Georgianindex.Net, 'The Egyptian Hall', [web page],  
<[http://www.georgianindex.net/Bullocks/Egyptian\\_Hall.html](http://www.georgianindex.net/Bullocks/Egyptian_Hall.html)>.

All of this was at a time before the arrival of pictorial newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News* (1842), which offered numerous wood engravings to popularise scenes of immediate interest to the public. By the time of Burford's Hobart Town panorama, innovations involved rotating audiences past multiple screens and dioramas, or exposing stationary viewers to changing images through the movement of screens. These inventive attempts to create the illusion of being present at an exotic location paralleled the early projection of images through the gradual development of magic lantern technology.

This technology, along with the appearance of machines to animate still images such as the phénakistiscope and zoetrope are considered as the precursors of cinema and broadcast television. The imaginative addition by Burford of Tasmanian Aborigines as picturesque devices to Earl's *Panorama of Hobart Town* is likely to be the first example of their appearance in a precursor to cinema. This re-inscription for popular entertainment of citizens of the metropole occurred ironically at a time when colonial patrons and their artists seemed determined to have Tasmanian Aborigines disappear from visual representations of Van Diemen's Land. As such, Burford's panorama is perhaps the most lively and innovative example of Bernard Smith's 'European Vision' to occur in the nineteenth-century; generating artistic and cultural innovation in a creative and unstable relationship between the imperial centre and its fringes.

The appearance of Tasmanian Aborigines in the London panorama is evidence of public demand (at least in London) to see them in landscape views. This suggests their absence in locally produced pictures as a tension between the requirements of colonial authorities such as Lt. Governor Paterson and popular reception. Colonial administrators could exert a direct influence on colonial artists, especially those convict artists or subordinate officers who could be easily instructed on the specifications of their chorographic work. Over several years, this practice is likely to have established a mode that was then voluntarily observed by more independent artists, in a period where discretion was essential to civic success.

As Penny Russell observes, in nineteenth-century Australia, 'manners mattered, as contested currency in the organization of a society where the growing fluidities of the

English class system were reproduced and intensified.<sup>396</sup> No-one plying the social interests of the middle class wanted to be caught up in scandal, especially artists who relied on their ability to appeal to fashionable taste and etiquette. It may be that the inclusion of Aborigines in views of Van Diemen's Land was simply "not the done thing". Such conventions however, could not be expected to hold in London. While Earle's decision not to add Aborigines to his *Panorama of Hobart Town* might have been expected in the colony, it probably left an undesirable gap in a spectacular scene that the paying audiences of the metropol expected would be replete with as much colonial exotica as could be imagined. Earle's inclusion of a few mundane signalmen in the foreground of his composition was likely to have been insufficient to Burford's entrepreneurial assessment. The addition of work gangs, convicts in chains and Aborigines is likely to have been exactly what his customers expected from an Antipodean penal colony on the outer boundaries of civilisation.

### *Tasmanian Views – John Lycett*

Perhaps the best known of the early topographical artists to produce views of Van Diemen's Land is Joseph Lycett. This artist has been subject to considerable scholarly attention, yet none of this discusses the noticeable absence of Aborigines in these views. Lycett's Tasmanian views were published as a series of engravings in London in 1824.<sup>397</sup> In this collection of twenty-four lithographs of New South Wales, seven include Aboriginal figures. Of the same number of Van Diemen's Land scenes, nineteen include noticeable human figures. None of these are Aborigines. Instead, his views are populated by settlers, going about their leisure and work.

Early in this project, I discussed my significant observation with several scholars and curators. The frequent response was that this peculiarity carried no weight, as Lycett had not actually visited Tasmania. The 'Advertisement' for Lycett's volume makes a different claim,

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<sup>396</sup> Penny Russell, 'The Brash Colonial: Class and Comportment in Nineteenth-Century Australia', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12/ArticleType: research-article / Full publication date: 2002 / Copyright © 2002 Royal Historical Society (2002). p. 433.

<sup>397</sup> John Mcphee, 'Views of Australia', in John Mcphee (ed.), *Joseph Lycett: Convict Artist* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2006).

The views may be regarded, with implicit confidence, as absolute *fac-similies of scenes and places*, having been taken from nature on the spot by Mr. Lycett, who resided more than ten years in the country, in the especial employ of the Governor as an Artist... (containing) every object which meets the eye of a spectator of the actual scene, whether they be such as the rude hand of Nature formed, or such as the arts of civilisation have fabricated for the use of social man.<sup>398</sup>

Lycett may have accompanied Governor Macquarie on his visit to Tasmania between April and July 1821, although John Turner<sup>399</sup> discusses a lack of expected evidence to support this, including no references in shipping, correspondence or official records. While McPhee concludes that G. W. Evans is the most likely source of original material that Lycett might have copied, he notes that no such original drawings have yet come to light to support this.<sup>400</sup> Jeanette Hoorn also posits Evans as a potential source of the original drawings, but notes that James Taylor accompanied Macquarie as well, thereby adding another possible origin.<sup>401</sup> Kerr suggests Taylor as the most likely to have produced the original drawings. She notes that Taylor had returned to England at the time Lycett was preparing his views of Van Diemen's Land for publication.<sup>402</sup>

There are notable stylistic differences between Evans' and Lycett's work. In particular, Lycett's originals do not include under-drawing, while Evans' do. However, given Lycett's competence as an artist, it is not difficult to imagine that he could use drawings significantly different to his own as a source of geographic and architectural information, adapting this data to his own style. As I have already discussed, John Lewin also used the work of other artists for his views of Port Dalrymple, so the practice was not uncommon.

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<sup>398</sup> Lycett, *Views in Australia or New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land Delineated, in Fifty Views, with Descriptive Letter Prefs.* p. ii.

<sup>399</sup> John Turner, *Lycett: Governor Macquarie's Convict Artist* (Newcastle, NSW: Hunter History Publications, 1997). p. 103-5.

<sup>400</sup> McPhee, 'Van Diemen's Land Watercolours'.

<sup>401</sup> Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape.* p. 57.

<sup>402</sup> Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists : Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* p. 780.

Claims in Lycett's publication that views were made 'on the spot' cannot be regarded as evidence. However, regardless of whether Lycett actually visited the island, it remains striking that his publication presents the Tasmanian colony as devoid of Natives. At the time Lycett produced several of the views, he was recorded in the details of an 1820 muster as 'at Government labour in the Colony,' undertaking commissioned work for Governor Macquarie, Commissioner Bigge and his Secretary Thomas Hobbes Scott. McPhee notes this work 'as a record of the appearance of the settlement'.<sup>403</sup> Lycett received a pardon in November 1821, and by August the following year, had made passage for himself and his two daughters to London. On his return, the artist continued work on a collection of watercolours, including a number of views of Van Diemen's Land. Known as the 'Derby Collection' and held by the Mitchell Library, none of these views include Aboriginal figures. However, it is notable that two engravings prepared from the artist's Chelsea address; *North view of Sydney, New South Wales, 1822*, and *North east view of Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land*, repeat the pattern observed by many other topographical artists of including Aborigines in the NSW scene, and excluding them from a comparable view in Van Diemen's Land.

Careful examination of the deployment of these figures across the three known versions of the Sydney scene demonstrate how Lycett made free use of the Aboriginal figures, changing their location, number and activity, even between the artist's proof and final hand-coloured engraving of the scene. There can be little doubt therefore, that the artist's use of Aboriginal figures was highly intentional and flexible to his desires for compositional and picturesque effect.

Lycett's experience in depicting Aboriginal people is clear. Representations of Aboriginal people of NSW in the 'Lycett Album' held by the National Library of Australia contrasts significantly with other depictions of Aborigines up to that time. Rather than caricatured or grotesque, as was the habit of artists like Richard Browne (1776-1824), Lycett's drawings are more ethnographic in their depiction of a people going about their cultural activities in a way that seems unlikely to threaten the English visitor or settler. Martin Terry records that at the time the 46th Regiment had

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<sup>403</sup> McPhee, 'Van Diemen's Land Watercolours'. pp. 22-3.

been despatched to 'quell a rebellion' of Native Blacks who 'broke out in Open Hostility against the British Settlers'. Captain Wallis' grenadiers had been responsible for killing 14 Aborigines in the process. Lycett's task, according to Terry was to support the reputation of Captain Wallis, commander of the town of Newcastle, as 'a benign administrator' who had succeeded in establishing a regime that was 'settled and in order'. All of this was intended to impress the Governor with a sense of tranquillity.



Figure 58 - Joseph Lycett, *View of Port Macquarie*, (above); *View on the River Tamar*, (below) engravings from Lycett, 1824.

The message of the album is that Awabakal people have been left alone and they look after themselves. There is no begging or need for blankets. They hunt and fish as they have always done.<sup>404</sup>

A comparison of Lycett's *View of Port Macquarie*, a location north of Newcastle, and *View on the River Tamar*, north of Hobart, is instructive in this regard (see fig. 58). Both these views are of locations at some distance from the colonial centre where the danger of Aboriginal resistance might be greatest. Compositionally, the scenes are very similar, with figures on the shore gesturing to a sailing vessel just off shore. In fact, the vessel depicted in both views is identical, no doubt taken from a common sketchbook. The key difference is that while the figures in *Port Macquarie* are Aboriginal, those in the *Tamar River* view are all European.

Another comparison of similar scenes demonstrates the repeated pattern of Aboriginal absence in Van Diemen's Land. *View of the Heads* (NSW) and *Mt Nelson* both show gateways to the colonies, with signal stations indicating state of the art communications technology, and ships in full sail connecting these remote outposts to the empire (fig. 59). In the NSW view Aborigines are included along with settlers as markers of place and, like the colonists at the signal station, gesture toward the ships. The Van Diemen's Land scene is typically without Aboriginal figures. Instead a uniformed officer accompanies a lady – creating a picture of order, security and perhaps sophistication lacking in the NSW view.

Engravings prepared from watercolour views of Van Diemen's Land feature a number of additions to emphasise the advancement of colonial industry. McPhee points to ships added to a harbour scene, smoke from a chimney, and extra figures to populate the landscape, including travellers, an artist (possible a self-portrait), and a soldier with a well-dressed female companion to create the impression of a safe, civilised and productive colonial setting,

All these later embellishments emphasise the extent and impact of European settlement and the safety of settlers and must have been very deliberately added,

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<sup>404</sup> Martin Terry, 'The Lycett Album', *ibid.* pp. 97-9.



not just to emphasise the picturesque elements of the landscape, but to appeal to potential investors and settlers.<sup>405</sup>

This leaves a key question. If Lycett's depictions of Aborigines in NSW could be used to assuage concerns about frontier conflict, why was this not attempted in relation to Van Diemen's Land which, at the time Lycett was creating his views of the colony was also experiencing violence between settlers and Aborigines?



Figure 59 - Joseph Lycett, View of The Heads at the entrance to Port Jackson, New South Wales, (above); Mount Nelson, near Hobart Town, from near Mulgrave battery, Van Diemen's Land, (below), engravings from Lycett, 1824.

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<sup>405</sup> John Mcphee, 'Van Diemen's Land Watercolours', *ibid.* p. 151.



### *A Colonial Prospectus*

There is a strong suggestion that Lycett was producing work in response to the need by colonial administrators to emphasise the favourable prospects offered by the colony. Several of the authors in McPhee's edited volume make this case plainly in relation to New South Wales, where the presence of Aborigines was undeniable and needed to be framed in the minds of viewers in simple picturesque terms. The task here seems to have been to depict the Natives as subdued and simply going about their curious business. As such, they could be included as staffage in views of colonial industry and progress without compromising the desired effect. Indeed, the presence of Aborigines, much like kangaroos, seems to be emblematic of an exotic land of promise, where the presence of people evidenced the bounty of these new lands without threatening the prospect of peace and prosperity.

The description of the 'natives of Australia' in Lycett's *Views in Australia* is clearly aimed at creating an impression of a parlous race, with little to threaten the colonist's ambition,

It would seem, from the concurrence of the best opinions upon the subject, that the natives of Australia occupy the lowest rank in the gradatory scale of the human species... their weapons of defence are the most rude imaginable... at worst, they are described as unable to muster more than fourteen or fifteen fighting men.<sup>406</sup>

In the detailed description of Van Diemen's Land, Aborigines are scarcely mentioned, other than to say that they were in the early years of the colony, 'excited... to acts of plunder' by bushrangers.<sup>407</sup> The description goes on to add,

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<sup>406</sup> Lycett, *Views in Australia or New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land Delineated, in Fifty Views, with Descriptive Letter Prefs.* p. 4.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

The improved state of the population of the colony, the respectable condition of its present military force, and the increasing securities of the settlers in their various locations, render the recurrence of such disgraceful transactions almost impossible; and it may be confidently said that the once-formidable Bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land are now completely exterminated.<sup>408</sup>

Hoorn sums up the task of landscape painters in her comments on Lycett's publication *Views of Australia*, as a,

new framework ... in the use of visual language that presented Europeans as masters of a fertile land that had been ordered by them and in which they were able to experience leisure.<sup>409</sup>

Hoorn also invokes Kenneth Clark's romantic definition of landscape, tying it in neatly with the imperative for capital development,

It is this new image of white settlers in harmony with a bountiful nature that produced the first sustained pastoral imagery and, at the same time, the first images of private property.<sup>410</sup>

Lewin's *Paterson's Garden* (fig. 50) is best considered with this context in mind. This simple watercolour demonstrated the potential for a new and harmonious beginning for the English in Van Diemen's Land, made possible by the transfer of ownership from the crown to private title and elaborated by the improvements wrought by fences, roads and forest clearance. It is no place for Aborigines. In fact, it is presented as evidence of the results that can flow from their absence when an enterprising individual took up a land grant.

The establishment of private land was an important step in guaranteeing a thriving colony. Land, once under governmental control, had to be 'taken up' and proven to be productive. Indeed, it was the success of multiple small landholders that was to be

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>409</sup> Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape*. p. 46.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

most effective in attracting free settlers who, unlike convicts, would bring badly needed capital to the colony. The first four land grants in Van Diemen's Land were made in 1804. Over the next two years another twenty-six were issued. However, by 1812 the number had scarcely doubled.<sup>411</sup> It was not until the relocation of settlers from Norfolk Island in 1813 that this situation changed. The task of the landscape artist during this period was to document and promote this process. The preceding necessity to alienate that land from the original owners need not be in question, especially when Aboriginal figures that might raise such uncomfortable issues at a time of continuing resistance to European invasion were banished from views.

By 1823, when Lycett was preparing engravings for the publication of his *Views of Australia*, the number of land grants had increased to 1776, covering 574,421 acres. The European population had increased from fewer than 200 in 1817, to over 12,000. Lieutenant John Bowen, who was in charge of the first Van Diemen's Land settlement at Risdon Cove in 1803, pronounced before ever seeing an Aborigine that they would not be 'of any use'. He thought he would be fortunate if he never saw them. By 1824 the extent of displacement of Aborigines from their country had escalated conflict, which worsened with every settler attack on the Aboriginal families that had to be forcibly driven from their land grants. Worse, the frightening spectre of bushranging had been reawakened with a report in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of December 1823 that two Aborigines had led a 'tame mob' of their countrymen on a rampage against stock-keepers, killing five in three separate incidents. Morgan considers that 'a degree of paranoia took hold of many settlers at this time'<sup>412</sup>. According to Lyndall Ryan, these incidents were associated with 'widespread panic' in the colony.<sup>413</sup> Aborigines, who had once been dismissed as little more than 'orang-outangs'<sup>414</sup> had now to be taken seriously as a potential threat to the colony's success.

It is likely that, in response to this developing situation, Lycett's *Views of Australia* paid careful attention to acknowledging Aboriginal presence, but sought to bracket

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<sup>411</sup> Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>412</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>413</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 77.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

them off from the colonists' world. According to his introductory account, 'the woods have seduced them at maturity.' Lycett then cites Baron Field Esq., Judge Advocate of New South Wales, who 'is of the strong opinion that our savages will never be other than they are.'<sup>415</sup> Having given a clear definition of the unthreatening and fixed nature of Aborigines, Lycett cements this in the descriptive text for each of his forty-eight views.



Figure 60 - Joseph Lycett, *View on the Wingecarabee River, New South Wales*, engraving from Lycett, 1824.

Aborigines are mentioned in two of the NSW scenes. In *View on the Wingecarabee River, New South Wales* Lycett reports of a 'wild, yet grand scenery' more suited to the pencil of Salvator Rosa. Here 'natives obtain immense quantities of Eels from the River'. Similarly, *The Sugarloaf Mountain, Near Newcastle, New South Wales* (1824) is reported as offering 'sand mullet, as large as seven pounds... (which) the Natives sometimes take.' In both these descriptions, the role of Aborigines is as provedores of the natural riches available. Each view shows colonists and Aborigines together. In *Wingecarabee River* (1824) a colonist and an Aborigine walk together hunting kangaroos, a picture of amity and generosity (see fig. 60).

Amongst the Van Diemen's Land scenes, only one includes mention of Aborigines in its description. *Cape Pillar, Near the Entrance of the River Derwent, Van Diemen's*

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<sup>415</sup> Lycett, *Views in Australia or New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land Delineated, in Fifty Views, with Descriptive Letter Prefs.* p. 4.

*Land* (1824) (see fig. 61) is even more sublime in its mood than *Wingeecarribee River*. In the foreground a sailing ship pushes through wild waves and is dwarfed by precipitous cliffs. The pillars of Jurassic dolerite are likened to ‘the interior of a gothic cathedral’ and the cape ‘appears barren, but is so exceedingly steep, that even the Black natives of the Island dare not venture to the summit.’



Figure 61 - Joseph Lycett, Cape Pillar, Near the Entrance of the River Derwent, Van Diemen's Land, engraving from Lycett, 1824.

Due to the escalating level of conflict on the island during the early 1820s, evidenced by a flood of letters sent home by settlers, and in official correspondence wrestling with the challenge of protecting the lives of both settler and Aborigine alike,<sup>416</sup> any attempt to depict Tasmanian Aborigines as passive and unopposed to British settlement would have been useless. Instead, another response seems to have been employed. It is difficult to imagine that the artist himself might have come up with the idea of banishing any reminder of the current conflict from his paintings. There would have been no benefit for him ideologically or financially – unless this was a direct instruction from those commissioning his work.

It has already been noted that Lycett was in the service of the Governor during his time in Sydney. The only surviving letter by the artist, sent to Wilmot Horton, undersecretary to Earl Bathurst on 18 June 1824, hints at the purpose of his

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<sup>416</sup> See Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars*.

publication. In the letter, he requests that the material for publication be passed on to the Earl for his inspection so that it might be appropriately dedicated to his name. Endorsement of the work at such a level ensured that it would be influential and effectively secured it as an authoritative tool in promoting the success of the colony. Lycett is described as Governor Macquarie's artist and the descriptions of each of the views are provided in the first person, suggesting an authentic, eye-witness account. The land is described in terms of its fertility for crops and grazing, as well as the sporting pleasure afforded by wildfowl and other game. Van Diemen's Land was presented as a land of industry and recreation.

Undoubtedly, the publication was aimed at the educated emigrant and wealthy investor, with numerous illustrations and references to the colonial success of individuals.<sup>417</sup>

Richard Neville adds to our understanding of the nature of Lycett's work with his reference to the sort of topographic pictures that 'did not invite philosophic contemplation from their audience.'<sup>418</sup> Instead he argues that work such as Lycett's, ubiquitous throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries in delineating most English towns and places of importance, was aimed at colonial patrons precisely because of its lack of artifice.

'It was easy to read evidence of progress by surveying the buildings in an image: the moral state of the population could be gauged by the number of churches and public buildings.'<sup>419</sup>

It was particularly important to promote such associations in Van Diemen's Land, which had been considered previously to be 'the abode of felons, a moral evil; which, in spite of other advantages, still compel many to forgo the little less than paradise

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<sup>417</sup> Mcphee, 'Joseph Lycett: A Biography'. p. 25.

<sup>418</sup> Richard Neville, 'Painting and Patronage', *ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

which it presents.’<sup>420</sup> For Neville, Lycett’s views were about ‘the more prosaic interest in describing the normalcy of colonial life in Australia.’<sup>421</sup>

Simply put, Lycett’s brief was likely to have been to calm the perception of the colony in the face of increasing conflict, and in so doing, attract more settlers with which to overwhelm increasing Aboriginal resistance. McPhee provides a tantalising suggestion that the Van Diemen’s Land Company had been actively seeking to overcome negative assessments of the investment potential on the island that had been made by Governor Sorell. The Company was intent on investing in grazing operations in the north of the island. To do this, they planned to secure large land grants, which required Bathurst’s agreement. McPhee cites company minutes from 18 December 1824 stating that, ‘it was therefore necessary to satisfy Lord Bathurst that Col. Sorell was mistaken to which purpose.’<sup>422</sup> The minutes go on to resolve that a number of people involved in mercantile promotion of Van Diemen’s Land be contacted to further this. The list includes the name of Joseph Lycett. McPhee concludes that the Van Diemen’s Land Company were using Lycett’s views, ‘as they were probably intended: as a promotional brochure to encourage investment in Australian and, in particular, Tasmanian pastoral activity’.<sup>423</sup>

However, McPhee does not note the consistent exclusion of Aborigines from the Tasmanian views. It is perhaps ironic, give the artist’s repeated convictions for forgery, that he might have been complicit in a fraud perpetrated at a much higher and more sophisticated level, to represent Van Diemen’s Land as land empty of anyone who might stand in the way of colonial success. In 1824 this was certainly not the case.

### *The Reason for Absence*

The visual record of contact with Tasmanian Aborigines in the vicinity of the settlements of Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple in the first decades of their founding

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<sup>420</sup> Blackwoods Magazine, November 1827, p. 606, cited in Neville *ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>422</sup> John McPhee, 'Joseph Lycett: A Biography', *ibid.* p. 25.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

contrasts starkly with that of Port Jackson. There are no equivalents of the many drawings by Port Jackson Painters recording outbreaks of violence between colonists and Aborigines, despite the occurrence of several fatal conflicts between the British and local Aborigines in both colonies. The few early images that are known, such as *View of Sullivan's Cove* (1804) by G. W. Evans (see fig. 54) show no sign of Aboriginal people at all. From that time up until the late 1820s, colonial artists producing topographic and other picturesque studies created a record from which beholders might easily conclude that Tasmanian Aborigines had disappeared almost completely from the colonial landscape. Such an observation would stand in stark contrast to that resulting from the records of the colonial landscape in New South Wales where Aborigines, while more numerous, were accorded a place in the visual rhetoric of colonial administration.

In this chapter, a number of influences on this important difference have been considered, many raising additional questions that cannot be resolved within the limited scope of the current project. However, the key question is whether Tasmanian Aborigines were seen by artists, but deliberately excluded from the views they produced.

By the time a settlement party had arrived in Hobart, the bloody encounter in May 1804 between soldiers at the initial British settlement at Risdon Cove had forced Aboriginal people to avoid any contact with the Europeans. It is not clear how many Aborigines were killed or injured during three hours of shooting, but when Lieutenant Moore finally fired on an approaching group of several hundred Aborigines with a small cannon, the number, according to recent forensic research, was at least seven to thirteen.<sup>424</sup> Estimates made closer to the time by Edward White and Captain James Kelly put the number at fifty.<sup>425</sup> Regardless of the actual number of dead and injured, this would have constituted a traumatic impact on the Aboriginal people of the region. Similar events followed in the north of the island. An encounter at Port Dalrymple in November of the 1804 created similar circumstances. Lt. Col. Paterson arrived on 5

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<sup>424</sup> William Refshauge, *The Killing at Risdon Cove* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016). p. 126.

<sup>425</sup> Lyndall Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 9 (2004).



November with a small party to secure a defensive position on a small hill near the mouth of the Tamar River in the country of the Leterremairrener people. They were reportedly attacked seven days later and responded by killing at least one Aborigine and injuring another.<sup>426</sup>

Both colonies suffered from a severe shortage of supplies and a lack of re-provisioning from Sydney. A decision taken by Lt. Governor David Collins to authorize the purchase of kangaroo meat may also have acted to reduce the likelihood of visual records of Tasmanian Aborigines being created over the next few years. G. P. Harris reported in October 1805 that ‘two to three thousand (lbs) weight a week’ of kangaroo were being procured for the government store.<sup>427</sup> Any convict with access to dogs could bring in up to eight kangaroos a day, along with less common emu, which provided almost as much meat. This marked the beginning of bushranging, with numerous convicts absconding and living year round in the bush.

The result severely impacted on Aboriginal tribes in the vicinity, as kangaroo and emu were the key source of game for Aborigines. The number of kangaroo being taken to meet the needs of the colonists, for trade and supply to visiting whalers and sealers is estimated by Boyce at two hundred a week.<sup>428</sup> Within a year, kangaroo were in short supply. Despite trebling the price paid and Collins ordering ‘every person who possesses the means’ to ‘furnishing the public stores with kangaroo’, a severe shortage ensued. At Port Dalrymple, Paterson reported,

Such was the slaughter of kangaroo necessary to preserve the lives of people that the difficulty of procuring them in sufficient quantities became gradually so much greater, and they were daily driven to such increasing distances from our camps...<sup>429</sup>

The reliance on convicts travelling greater distances from the settlements resulted in a diminution of the authorities’ ability to maintain control of their activities.

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<sup>426</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 42.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. p. 47.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

Aborigines, who had opposed the taking of kangaroo by the British from the first days of their arrival began spearing kangaroo hunters and, in turn, were attacked and killed. Convict depredations were soon including Aboriginal women, which aggravated conflict further. As ever-increasing areas of bush around the settlements became depleted of game and hostile to Aborigines, the likelihood of contact with artists in the colonies became greatly diminished. While these events might account for an absence of drawings of Tasmanian Aborigines in the first decade of British invasion, it is also a cogent testament to the particular impact that the British had in the Tasmanian colony.

Another significant factor in explaining the absence of drawings of Tasmanian Aborigines in those early years of the Van Diemen's Land colonies was the scarcity of artists in Hobart or Launceston. There were no equivalents to the Port Jackson Painters. The body of 250 watercolours left by these unidentified artists includes studies of Aboriginal life and culture including fishing, hunting, tree climbing, and bush medicine, as well as several portraits of individual Aborigines.<sup>430</sup> However, prolific artists such as Richard Browne and Thomas Watling did not visit Tasmania. A number of colonial officers in NSW, including William Bradley, George Raper, John Hunter and Henry Brewer were responsible for originating and copying works at this time. Governors Philip Gidley King and William Bligh were also active as amateur artists. However, no Tasmanian works depicting Aborigines are known from these artists either. Surveyors G. W. Evans, G. P. Harris and military officer James Taylor all travelled extensively in Van Diemen's Land up to the early 1820s, leaving a record of their own drawings, or copies of their work by John Lewin and Joseph Lycett. All contributed numerous portrait studies and landscapes with Aboriginal people during their time in NSW, but none have been found in their Tasmanian works.

Evans was among the first to break with the picturesque traditions employed so characteristically by Watling. Bernard Smith saw his views and those of John Eyre as 'purely topographical in intention'<sup>431</sup> and designed to be informative and descriptive. They established the template for the Tasmanian views that have been considered by

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<sup>430</sup> John McDonald, *Art of Australia: Exploration to Federation* (vol. 1; Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2008). p. 42.

<sup>431</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 218.

this project. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the task of topographic painters was to provide an accurate, chorographic representation of colonial progress. Petrus Spianus, writing in 1533, offered this enduring definition,

Chorography is the same thing as topography, which one can define as the plan of a place that describes and considers its peculiarities... as small as they may be, that are worth noting in such places, such as ports, towns, villages, and all similar things, including buildings, houses, towers, walls and the like.<sup>432</sup>

### *Evident Exceptions*

The failure of these painters to record Aborigines might therefore be expected to demonstrate a real absence in the landscapes they observed. However, evidence presented in this chapter suggests this was clearly not the case. Indeed, Evans' assistant, Thomas Scott (1800-1855), made two rough sketches in his notebook *Account of Van Diemen's Land, 1822* confirming this. One of the drawings shows four Aborigines, one with a long spear and the other with two waddies, while two others are seated in front of a hut by a fire. The other sketch is of an Aboriginal man spearing a kangaroo (fig. 62)



Figure 62 - Thomas Scott, Natives of Van Diemen's Land Sitting at their Fire in front of their hut; a Native of Van Diemen's Land Spearing a Kangaroo, 1821, drawings (detail), State Library of New South Wales.

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<sup>432</sup> Cited in Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture*. p. 16.

Unfortunately, the notebook does not include any further description of these scenes. However, they do provide clear evidence that Scott, and possibly Evans and Macquarie, did encounter Aboriginal people on their tour – making their absence in the visual record that resulted even more peculiar. In another of Scott's sketchbooks, also dated on the cover as 1822, there are dozens of simple views of landscape features, maps and other sketches of various insects, birds and fish. However, the most finished of these is a watercolour view of a waterfall on Jones's River, flowing into the Derwent. Prominent in the foreground is a tree, clearly displaying notches cut by Aborigines in their hunt for possums (Fig. 63). Scott describes the tree as being marked by Aborigines with a 'flint stone for climbing it'. While the sketch includes no Aboriginal figures, it documents unambiguously the cultural presence of natives in the area.



Figure 63 - Thomas Scott, *Lower fall on Jones's River*, 1823. Inscription, 'South bank of the River Derwent V.D. Land. The land around it the property of Walter Angus B... Esqr. Gum tree - notched by the Natives with a flint stone for climbing it', ink and watercolour, State Library of New South Wales.

Another important exception to this disinclination to depict Tasmanian Aborigines was produced by Robert Neill (1801-1852). Arriving in Hobart Town in 1820, Neill worked with the British Army's commissariat, but reflected a strong family interest in natural history. During several postings around the island, he produced a small

number of portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines, pioneering an interest that briefly blossomed in the colony after the end of the Black War (see Chapter 4). While his oil painting *Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* (1828) might be more properly considered as a group portrait (fig. 64) than a landscape, it is notable as a rare artistic record of Tasmanian Aborigines in a landscape setting at a time when other artists were ignoring the subject. Most importantly for the current discussion, it also establishes that Aborigines were present in the lives of artists, and further problematizing the lack of a substantial record in this regard. Dutton remarks,

Neill's drawings still have the idyllic peace of the early French observations of the Van Diemen savages, and since he was working in Hobart in 1828, and he says he drew the Aborigines *del Vivum* it would seem that this peace was still possible, even so close to civilisation.<sup>433</sup>

It is notable that Neill's painting bears a close similarity to Thomas Watling's (1762-c.1814) *Group on the North Shore of Port Jackson* (1794), further attesting to the incongruous absence in *Van Diemen's Land* of depictions in the style of Port Jackson painters. The stylistic and compositional similarities of these pictures indicate what might have been expected to be occurring on the island twenty years before Neill created his unique Tasmanian work (fig. 64). It must be noted that Watling's drawing was published as an engraving, and may have been copied by Neill who, despite his insistence that the picture was created from life, could easily have passed it off as such for commercial benefit.

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<sup>433</sup> Dutton, *White on Black: The Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art*, p. 34.



Figure 64 - Robert Neill, *Aborigines of Tasmania*, 1828, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia (top); Thomas Watling, *A Group on the North Shore of Port Jackson, New South Wales* (ca.1792-1797), Natural History Museum, London (bottom).

The landscape paintings of John Glover are well known for the inclusion of Aboriginal figures in his paintings. Glover almost single-handedly reverses the absence of Tasmanian Aborigines from landscape painting when he arrives in Van Diemen's Land near the end of the Black War in 1831. However, before considering Glover's work in more detail in the next chapter, it is worth ending this one with a painting that appeared mid way through Glover's Tasmanian output. In a number of ways similar to a several of Lycett's scenes in New South Wales, it places a group of Aboriginal figures in the foreground of a distinctive view of Hobart Town. However, the palette and style is unlike the topographical works of the naval artists and



surveyors of Port Jackson. This painting bears more of a resemblance to the landscapes of John Webber, Thomas Watling or Augustus Earle.



Figure 65 - William Buelow Gould, *River Scene with Aborigines*, 1838, oil on paper, W.L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania.

*River Scene with Aborigines* (1838) emerged from a highly productive period in the life of convict painter William Beulow Gould (1801-1853). During 1838 he produced a number of landscape views of waterfalls and coastal scenes. Among these were two views of the Derwent River. In one of them are placed two innocuous figures of Aborigines (fig. 65) – so innocuous that Garry Darby, in his catalogue raisonné of Gould does not even mention them.<sup>434</sup> However, these figures are of similar significance to those in Neill's picture, as they illustrate how one might have expected Tasmanian Aborigines to feature in picturesque scenes over the previous fifty years. Instead they are almost unique. Gould seems to be the only Tasmanian artist other than John Glover to have placed Tasmanian Aborigines in conventional landscape scenes before the end of the 1830s. By then the Black War was over, and there was no

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<sup>434</sup> Garry Darby, *William Buelow Gould: Convict Artist of Van Diemen's Land* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1980), p. 67.

longer any reason to obscure Aborigines from the colonial prospect in Van Diemen's Land, as their campaign of resistance to British invasion had been ended.

Kenneth Clark innocently considered that 'landscape painting marks the stages in our conception of nature... part of a cycle in which the human spirit attempted once more to create a harmony with its environment'.<sup>435</sup> The artists at work in Tasmania cannot be seen in this light, as they do not adhere to the task of the chorographer with diligence. Their work corresponds more closely with a critical thesis argued by W. J. T. Mitchell, that 'landscape is a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism.'<sup>436</sup> The task of these artists was to create an accurate profile of the colony's resources, usually at the behest of governors or other officers; so they were also subject to specific direction, potentially placing their visual record at odds with what they would normally have expected to include in their pictures. As a result, their pictures could easily have varied from what they had personally seen or heard. With this possibility in mind, Scott's sketch and Neill's painting stand out as rare exceptions; informal works by junior officers that provide a graphic example of the detail those more senior officials and visiting artists such as Earle chose to ignore.

There can be no doubt that the original drawings upon which the landscape views of Van Diemen's Land considered in this chapter were based are a product of artists who were exposed in some way to the presence of Tasmanian Aborigines. The impact of Aborigines on the lives of settlers and the economy of the colony was simply too great to have been casually overlooked. That many of these artists (Evans, Taylor and Harris) were in vice-regal service makes it highly probable that the apparent exclusion of Aborigines in the visual records they produced was done under direct instruction. As such, this represents an aberration of the chorographic task of the topographer.

The purpose of this intervention was likely due to a number of factors. Firstly, by the time that detachments were sent to establish the Tasmanian colony, there was no longer any appetite for creating official detailed records of conflict with Aborigines. These early contacts, being of a violent nature, did not provide suitable picturesque

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<sup>435</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: John Murray, 1949). p. viii.

<sup>436</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). p. 5.



subjects. Secondly, the withdrawal of Tasmanian tribes from the vicinity of the settlements of Risdon Cove/Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple during the first ten years, created an impression that Aborigines might not be a significant ongoing presence. Views promoting the prospects of the colony could therefore be optimistically made without reference to Aborigines. Thirdly, this notional disappearance was then consolidated to ameliorate the reputational damage to the colonies' desirability as a destination for settlers; damage resulting from increasing conflict during the 1820s. This disappearing of Aborigines, once established, found willing co-operation from artists outside of the direct control of government as they sought to appeal to local conventions and perhaps position themselves for future commissions – prospects that might be spoiled by an unorthodox interest in savages. The trope of absence in Van Diemen's Land, however, came to contrast sharply with popular expectations of the market for colonial landscape views in London; a tension illustrated by the creative re-inscription of Aborigines into Burford's panorama exhibition in 1820s London.

All of this occurred against a backdrop of persistent attitudes that considered Aborigines in Australia, and Tasmania in particular, to be incapable of participating in the colonial process of civilisation. This persistence of Dampier's characterization of ignoble savagery, coupled with settler paranoia resulting from increasing resistance from Tasmanian Aborigines, soon transformed into not only a desire for their complete disappearance, but active measures to achieve this.

The story of visual representation of Tasmanian Aborigines in early nineteenth-century landscape painting is therefore an ambiguous one in which, perversely, the original occupants are referred to by their absence. As John Berger argued,

It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world within words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972). p.7.

The declaration of *terra nullius* by Cook on his arrival in Tasmania created an appetite for the disappearance of Aborigines even before the process of colonization was begun. Once this process had commenced, correspondence and reports that Aborigines were not acting in a way consistent with what might be expected of parlous savages with no sense of history or home; but instead were actively defending their country, were countered with a visual rhetoric that denied this reality. As David Reason writes, ‘An image of nature has, like Narcissus’s reflection, the status of something possessed and yet not possessed, of something seeking to snare what remains always elusive.’<sup>438</sup> A small, retreating Aboriginal population made this rhetoric seem plausible, and it was quickly bolstered with a popular desire for Aborigines to be completely gone from the island.

In the next chapter I examine the period associated with Tasmania’s Black War, when the colony concentrated its available resources on physically removing Aborigines from a landscape that had, through three decades of visual representation, already presaged their extermination.<sup>439</sup> With deepening irony, this period sees the re-inscription of Tasmanian Aborigines in landscape painting, as John Glover sought to make artistic sense of the campaign of removal that he witnessed on his arrival in Tasmania, and its ‘unsettling’ consequences. This period also brought history painting to the island, and an attempt to describe the removal of Aborigines as the culmination of a heroic, yet tragic injustice that transformed Tasmanian Aborigines from forest dwelling savages into dignified survivors of a just war.

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<sup>438</sup> David Reason, ‘Echo and Reflections’, in Roy F. Ellen and David Reason (eds.), *Classifications in Their Social Context* (London: Academic Press, 1987). p. 168.

<sup>439</sup> Use of the term ‘exterminate’ in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia related to removal from a region, i.e., *ex-termināre, to mark boundaries*.

## Chapter 4 - A Taste for War

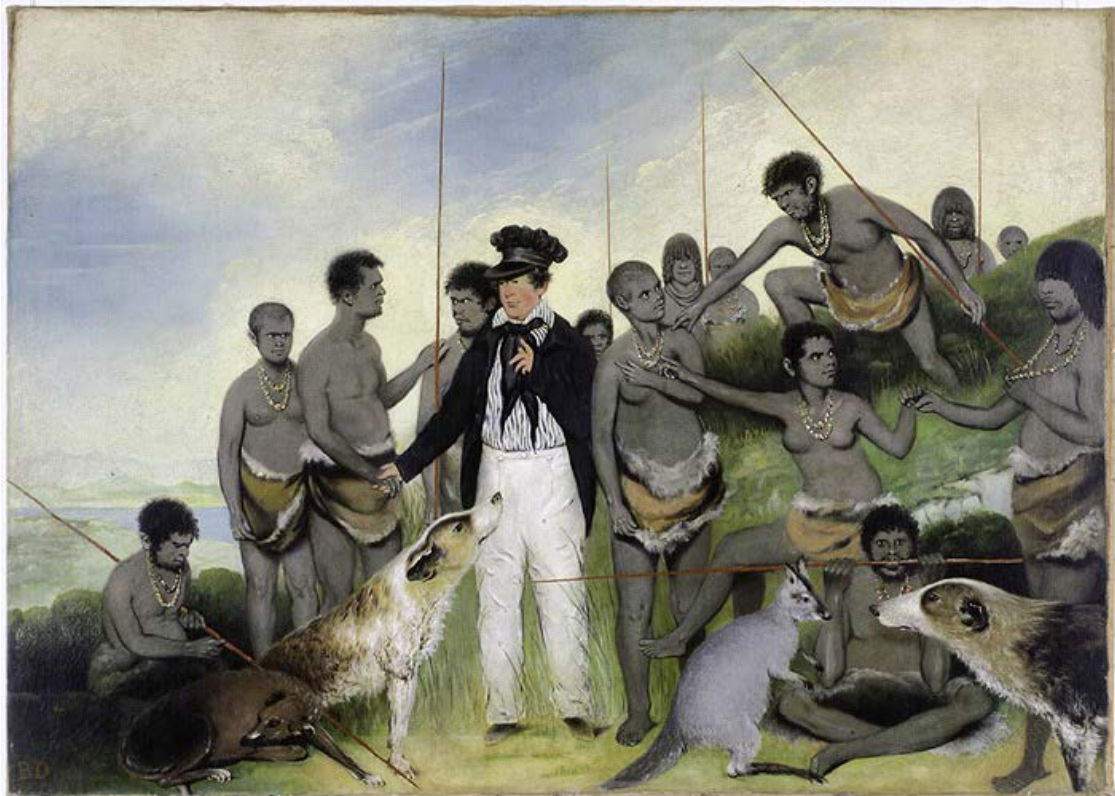


Figure 66 - Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*, 1840, oil on canvas, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

*The whole race... may, at no distant period become extinct. Any line of conduct, having for its avowed, or for its secret object, the extinction of the Native race, could not fail to leave an indelible stain upon the character of the British Government.*

Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for War and Colonies, 1830.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Copy of a Despatch from Secretary Sir George Murray to Lieutenant Governor Arthur, 5 November, 1830, cited in Bischoff, *Sketch of the History of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 233.

By 1825, Van Diemen's Land was being described in correspondence as being in 'an awful state' where there were 'dreadful robberies and murders continually.' James Boyce reports that even the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, had made a private recommendation to his neighbour William Lyne, 'that Van Diemen's Land had so many problems with bushrangers and Aborigines that he was better off going to New South Wales.'<sup>441</sup> It is clear from such records that the claims made in Joseph Lycett's *Views of Australia* (1824) of a peaceful colony of pastoral leisure were far from the truth.

Van Diemen Land had an established and well-known problem with bushrangers, made up initially of absconding convicts living outside the law and preying on any settlers or Aborigines that they might encounter. This was, according to Boyce, a problem of the government's own making. He quotes the settler and trader James Gordon from a statement in 1820 on the origin of bushranging,

I think that it originated from a practice that prevailed as far back as the time of Governor Collins, who, when provisions were not to be had, allowed the convicts to repair into the country and hunt for the kangaroo.<sup>442</sup>

Lycett's assurance in his *Views of Australia* that the lawless banditti of bushrangers and Aborigines had been 'exterminated' was at best optimistic. It is more likely that the assurances in this publication reflected celebration of the killing of the notorious bushranger Michael Howe in 1818, just four years before Lycett's return to London. At the time of the publication, a number of bushrangers and armed Aboriginal fighters were still at large in Van Diemen's Land. During 1823-4, the Sydney Aborigine Mosquito, who had been brought to Van Diemen's Land as a convict, and the Tasmanian Aborigine known as Black Jack had joined with the 'Tame Mob' of Aborigines living on the fringes of Hobart Town and agitated them to violence resistance. After killing a number of settlers at Swansea, they carried out raids along the east coast, causing panic amongst the settlers.<sup>443</sup> To make matters worse, in 1824 Matthew Brady made his escape with 13 other convicts from Sarah Island, resulting

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<sup>441</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 167.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>443</sup> Johnson and Macfarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History*.

in a 'series of daring raids that became legendary'.<sup>444</sup> The situation could not have contrasted more starkly with Lycett's claims.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, it is likely that both the government and large capital interests such as the Van Diemen's Land Co. directed or cajoled Lycett into creating a suite of views to support a proposition of great importance to the colony's economic success.<sup>445</sup> They may have even financially supported his publication, although further research is required to support this speculation. Potential free settlers and investors had to be assured that there was no more need for concern about conflict with Aborigines. This was best achieved by the publication of pictorial 'evidence' that they were nowhere to be seen on the island colony. Further indications of the administration's interest in managing information about the crisis is evident in the 1827 decision to ban what was possibly the first book of verse produced in the colony. *The Van Diemen's Land Warriors, or the Heroes of Cornwall: a satire in three cantos*, was printed by Andrew Dent, owner of the *Colonial Times* newspaper, and distributed in both Hobart and Launceston.

Gem'men said he, those rogues *have done too much*.

My blood now *rises*, and my thoughts are such,

The *soldiers* will never divest the land

Of this terrific, plund'ring, murd'rous band.<sup>446</sup> (emphasis in the original)

Dent had been in repeated conflict with Governor Sorell, and with the arrival of Governor Arthur in 1824, Dent was imprisoned for libel and upon release continued to express opposition to the Governor's attempts to control the press. The name Pindar Juvenal is thought to have been a *nom de plume* used by Dent's editor and lawyer Evan Henry Thomas.<sup>447</sup> Notes in the edition held by the National Library of Australia indicate that the government ordered all copies of the book be destroyed.

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<sup>444</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 166.

<sup>445</sup> Mcphee, 'Joseph Lycett: A Biography'.

<sup>446</sup> Pindar Juvenal, *The Van Diemen's Land Warriors, or the Heroes of Cornwall: A Satire in Three Cantos* (Hobart Town: W. Wylde, 1827). p. 8.

<sup>447</sup> Thomas' poems first appeared in the *Hobart Town Gazette* in 1822, signed E.H.T. See E. Flynn, 'Thomas, Evan Henry (1801–1837)', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thomas-ewan-henry-2725>>.

*The Van Diemen's Land Warriors* was a satire on the failure of the military in Tasmania to effectively control bushrangers, and its suppression would appear to have been highly successful. The only known copy is held by the National Library of Australia, and is from the collection of James Thomson, who decried the book to the authorities, while holding this copy for himself.

Even with the execution of Mosquito and Black Jack in 1825, and Matthew Brady in 1826, the bushranger problem in Van Diemen's Land continued, with the Britton gang active in the north of the island until 1835, and Martin Cash and fellow escapees from Port Arthur robbing mail coaches, homesteads and inns until 1843.<sup>448</sup> At the same time, Aboriginal attacks on settlers were increasing in proportion to the granting of land and appropriation of large extents of Aboriginal country for the grazing of European stock. In 1826, just two years after Lycett's *Views of Australia* was published in London, Governor George Arthur issued the following statement proclaiming circumstances that would justify violence by settlers against Aborigines,

If it should be apparent that there is a determination on the part of one or more of the native tribes to attack, rob or murder the white inhabitants generally, any person may arm, and, joining themselves to the military, drive them by force to a safe distance, treating them as open enemies.<sup>449</sup>

This year, 1826, can be considered the beginning of Tasmania's Black War. Between then and 1831, officially sanctioned roving parties were formed and an extravagant military campaign was mounted involving over two thousand soldiers and colonists. These initiatives, together with opportunistic massacres by settlers, were aimed at completely removing 'wild Aborigines' from settled areas. According to Ryan, this resulted in at least 758 Aborigines being killed by settlers during the five-year period. Over 150 Europeans died in the process, and another 180 were injured.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Karl R. Von Steiglitz, 'A Short History of Ross: With Some Tales of the Pioneers.', (Evandale, Tasmania, 1949).

<sup>449</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2013). p. 66.

<sup>450</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. pp. 143-4.

In this chapter, I examine the response of artists to the Black War by seeking to understand the context of their artistic production, and survey the resulting shift in visual representations of Tasmanian Aborigines. To do this, I contrast the visual record of early violence in the NSW colony against an examination of the scarcity of such representations in Van Diemen's Land. I find that, apart from isolated representations of violent confrontation, the visual history of Van Diemen's Land appears circumspect in this regard, with very few pictures of aggressive interaction known to exist. By 1834, with the remaining Aboriginal resistance fighters placed into permanent detention on an offshore island, settlers finally realize, in practical terms, their popular desire for the original owners of the island to be gone.

The disappearing of Aborigines from the pictorial landscape over the previous three decades was finally translated into actual bodily absence, and the visual history of Aborigines in colonial art resolves itself as an augury of extermination. *Terra nullius*, asserted as a convenient philosophical and legal fiction at the arrival of the British in Tasmania, and then imagined as a visual reality by picturesque painters on the island, is ironically celebrated as the Black War comes to a close, with Aborigines reappearing in landscape painting through the well-known and celebrated work of John Glover.

### *The Spearing of Governor Arthur Philip (1790)*

The dearth of representation of frontier violence in Van Diemen's Land is more easily understood by considering the visual record of conflict that immediately preceded it in the NSW colony. In the late 1980s, Jeanette Hoorn uncovered a series of drawings during her work at the Natural History Museum in London that offer an important insight into early representations of conflict with Aborigines in the Australian colonies. What Hoorn describes as her 'Spearing Quintet'<sup>451</sup> of drawings relate to the tactics of Governor Philip that began the year following the First Fleet's arrival in Australia. Philip took a series of Aboriginal hostages in order to establish superior negotiations with the tribes around Port Jackson. The unsigned drawings by a Port Jackson Painter, together with another by William Bradley (1757-1833), detail the

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<sup>451</sup> Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape*. p. 21.



taking of the two hostages, an incident in which the governor was speared, his escape, a subsequent meeting with one of the warriors (Benelon), and finally the dispatch of a punitive party after more spearings had taken place.



Figure 67 - A Port Jackson Painter, Mr Waterhouse endeavouring to break the Spear after Governor Philip was wounded by Wil-le-me-ring where the Whale was cast on shore in Manly Cove, c. 1790, watercolour, natural History Museum, London (detail below).

The two drawings describing the attack on the governor and his escape were clearly important records of a serious breach of the peaceful relations that Philip had been instructed to establish (fig. 67). Most significantly, they documented that initially the aggression was on the part of the natives. Together with a drawing from the same time showing another attack on a sailor (fig. 68), the spearing of Philip is one of the



few images from that time recording explicit violence. These have no equivalent in the early Van Diemen's Land record.



Figure 68 - A Port Jackson Painter, *Untitled* (c. 1790), watercolour, Natural History Museum, London.

It is the record of the governor's meeting with Benelon that is perhaps most significant, as this event was to become critical in influencing the role of Aborigines in the vicinity of the British settlement from then on. It records the location at which Philip presents a gift of fresh fish to the warrior, thereby re-establishing peaceful relations after the attack on the governor ten days before. This led, according to Hoorn, to the 'coming in of the tribes', as the Wangal and Cadigal Aborigines returned to the Port Jackson area in large numbers.<sup>452</sup> The drawing (see fig.69) shows four Aborigines in canoes, being approached by the governor's longboat. This was a pivotal point in the settlement's fortunes. From that time onwards, Port Jackson Aborigines were often considered a nuisance, but at least they were no longer a significant threat.

The final drawing in this 'quintet' describes the activities of a punitive expedition that was dispatched by Philip after his gamekeeper was fatally speared eight weeks later.

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid. p. 27.



Figure 69 - A Port Jackson Painter, Ban nel lang meeting the Governor by appointment after he was wounded by Willemaring in September 1790, c. 1790, watercolour, Natural History Museum, London.

Significantly, this was not the result of a Cadigal or Wangal attack, but allegedly by the warrior Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal clansman from Botany Bay to the south. Philip's response was severe and intended as not only a punishment of the Botany Bay tribe, but also as a reminder to those tribes whose friendship he had won of the consequences of further aggression against the British. His instructions were that six Aboriginal men were to be either brought in or killed.

The drawing *Mr. White, Harris and Laing with a party of Soldiers visiting Botany Bay Colebee at that place, when wounded* (c. 1790) shows the search party interrogating a woman on the whereabouts of their men (see fig. 70). Hoorn sees the action of the Englishman prodding at a woman seated on the ground with her child as contradicting the governor's orders that no women or children were to be injured in the foray.<sup>453</sup> While the image is menacing, it was more likely intended to evidence the Governor's instruction for restraint, as the gun is not pointed at the woman.

Drawings such as these were clearly valued by colonial authorities as a record of progress (no matter how fraught) in establishing military and tactical dominance at the Port Jackson settlement. They were testament to the Governor's responsible

<sup>453</sup> *ibid.* p. 28.



Figure 70 - A Port Jackson Painter. *Mr. White, Harris and Laing with a party of Soldiers visiting Botany Bay Colebee at that place, when wounded, c. 1790*, watercolour, Natural History Museum, London (detail).

administration of the colony in challenging circumstances and valuable as evidence to accompany reports to the Admiralty. In stark contrast, the circumstances by which Aborigines came under cannon fire at Risdon Cove in Van Diemen's Land, fourteen years later, are not depicted in any known official graphic record of the time. Instead, our knowledge of this event is derived entirely from correspondence and reports, and the deliberations of a committee of inquiry set up twenty-six years later.<sup>454</sup> This is perhaps not surprising, as the naval personnel at Risdon Cove were responsible for a 'great many' Aboriginal men, women and children 'slaughtered or wounded'.<sup>455</sup> These Aboriginal families were described by eye-witnesses as conducting a kangaroo hunt, armed only with waddies, rather than spears. The Risdon Cove massacre, as it has become known, could be characterized as neither tactical, nor restrained. A visual record would have offered little value to the officers responsible.

The 'Spearing Quintet' of drawings neatly delineated a violent incident in the founding years of the NSW colony. These pictures formed a vibrant component of the British story of creating a successful settlement at Port Jackson through leadership

<sup>454</sup> Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History'.

<sup>455</sup> Phillip Tardiff, 'Risdon Cove', in Robert Manne (ed.), *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Melbourne: Black Inc Agenda, 2003).

and superiority. The image of Aborigines in canoes, featured prominently in the conciliatory scene of *Ban nel lang meeting the Governor*, became a symbol of enduring amity that was deployed across numerous NSW views by topographical artists for the next thirty years or more. An Aborigine in a canoe became an icon of passivity, allowing artists to re-focus attention on the task of economic development and the conditions that were being created to foster this.

The continuing presence of canoes on the waters around Sydney in these views provided a reassurance of the ability of colonists to co-exist peacefully with Aborigines, even when conflict was known to be occurring in farther flung regions. They served as a stamp of Governor Philip's success in founding a peaceful centre for the new Australian colonies. The violent incidents at Risdon Cove and Port Dalrymple in 1803 offered no similar dividends. Instead, they set the scene for a period in Van Diemen's Land where Aborigines were instead disappeared from view.

### *Expanding Frontiers*

It should not be assumed nevertheless, that Philip's conciliation with Benelon and the 'coming in' of the Aborigines resulted in an enduring peace in the NSW colony. The arrival of Governor Macquarie brought with it an aggressive civic building program and a pushing forward of the frontier beyond the Blue Mountains to enable expansion of pastoral industry. An important function of this expansion was to accommodate the numerous flocks of sheep now being bred in the colony by free settlers with substantial capital. Macquarie's first expansionary expedition, in 1814, was in the company of G. W. Evans and John Lewin, who documented the territories now being annexed with drawings for later publication.

Macquarie's instructions at this time were for Aborigines to be treated with respect.<sup>456</sup> However, by the following year, he had written to his superior in England, Earl Bathurst, to note that his efforts 'to domesticate and civilize these wild rude people',

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<sup>456</sup> Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: The Making of a White Landscape*. p. 35.

had been unsuccessful.<sup>457</sup> Macquarie abandoned his previous approach and issued instructions to Captain Schaw of the 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment,

On any occasion of seeing or falling in with the Natives, either in bodies or singly, they are to be called on, by your friendly Native Guides, to surrender themselves to you as Prisoners of War. If they refuse to do so, make the least show of resistance, or attempt to run away from you, you will fire upon and compel them to surrender, breaking and destroying the spears, clubs, and waddies of all those you take Prisoners. Such Natives as happen to be killed on such occasions, if grown up men, are to be hanged up on trees in conspicuous situations, to strike the Survivors with the greater terror. On all occasions of your being obliged to have recourse to offensive and coercive measures, you will use every possible precaution to save the lives of the Native Women and Children, but taking as many of them as you can Prisoners.<sup>458</sup>

The views published by Lycett from this period show few Aborigines, especially compared to his earlier scenes around Newcastle, many of which featured Aboriginal people and detailed their cultural lives.<sup>459</sup> These ethnographic drawings, completed in 1817, were encouraged by Capt. Wallis. It appears that once Lycett began to work for Governor Macquarie this sort of work was no longer encouraged, reflecting the Governor's hardening attitude to the natives. By the time Governor Macquarie commenced his tour of Van Diemen's Land in 1821, a similar expansion of the frontier was being planned for the island colony. Macquarie's authorisation and experience of depredations on Aboriginal people in New South Wales would have enabled him to anticipate the likely results for Tasmanian Aborigines. This may well have disinclined him to have them depicted at all in the Tasmanian setting. Better to disappear them in the visual rhetoric of the colony from the outset, than have to describe or explain the consequences that were almost certain to follow as the New South Wales model of pastoral expansion was brought to bear in Van Diemen's Land.

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<sup>457</sup> Michael Organ, 'Secret Servie: Governor Macquarie's Aboriginal War of 1816', *Proceedings of the National Conference of the Royal Australian Historical Society* (Research Online edn.; Mittagong: University of Wollongong, 15-26 October 2014).

<sup>458</sup> Ibid. np.

<sup>459</sup> John Maynard, *True Light and Shade: An Aboriginal Perspective of Joseph Lycett's Art* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2014).



While there is no comparable pictorial archive describing frontier violence in Van Diemen's Land by artists under the direction of colonial authorities, it is not surprising that the extent of violence across the colony, and the outrage that it engendered amongst colonists, did result in scattered, less formal records. One of the few known examples of these is associated with an event that has become known as the 'Attack on Milton Farm'. In this incident, John Allen, who had been granted land near Bushy Creek, was attacked on 14 December 1828, and his hut and crops burned. Little attention has been paid to the three pictures that resulted from this incident. The best account of these is by David Hansen, who came across an oil painting in storage at the TMAG during his term as Senior Curator. Hansen described the oil as a 'genteel(ish) parlour painting', by an artist without training; 'perhaps a jobbing portraitist or coach painter'.<sup>460</sup> The naïve nature of the painting is not important. Rather, it is its rarity as a picture of an attack on a Van Diemen's Land settler's hut that marks out its significance.



Figure 71 - Artist unknown, after John Allen, *Aboriginal raid on Milton Farm, Great Swanport*, c.1833, oil on academy board, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

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<sup>460</sup> David Hansen, 'A Raid', *The Griffith Review*, 39 (2012).

The painting (see fig. 71) is dated c. 1833, and appropriately linked by Hansen to two drawings, clearly identified as sketches of the same incident and dated at 1828. One of the sketches is held by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), and the other by the State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW). Hansen ascribes both sketches to Allen himself, and offers an astute comparative description, pointing to differences in each and several deviations from written accounts of the attack. However, with a close knowledge of the ethnography of Tasmanian Aborigines and local colonial history, it is possible to add new detail to this.

Hansen complements the sketch-maker for a 'close observed Otherness'<sup>461</sup> in detailing the body decoration and tactics of the Aborigines. He notes the inclusion of both spears and waddies amongst the Indigenous weaponry. Missing in Hansen's analysis however, is the significant difference in depiction of spears in each sketch. In the SLNSW version (fig. 72), the spears are correct for Van Diemen's Land. They take the form of simple, long shafts with a narrow point at each end. However, in the TMAG version (fig. 73), the spears are quite different. Their shafts are shorter, and the tips are constructed with three prongs. Spears of this design are not typical of Tasmanian Aboriginal manufacture. Instead, they are more like the 'Gararra', or fishing spears made by the Gweagal and other tribes around Sydney.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. p 172.

<sup>462</sup> See Collection of the National Museum of Australia  
<http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/object/219490>, Accessed 10 September, 2016.



Figure 72 - Attributed to John Allen, The Aborigines of Van Demondsland endeavouring to kill Mr John Allen on Milton Farm in the District of Great Swanport on the 14th December 1828 (sic), pencil, State Library of New South Wales.

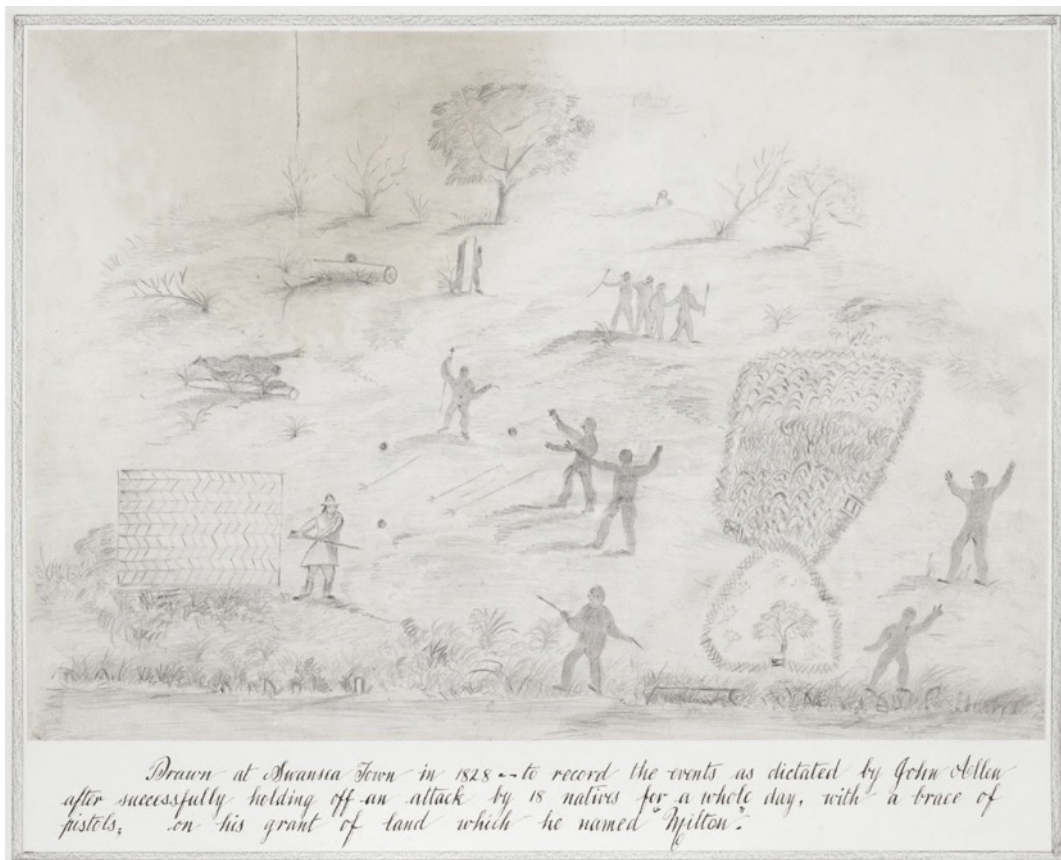


Figure 73 - Attributed to John Allen, Drawn at Swansea Farm in 1828 – to record the events as dictated by John Allen after successfully holding off an attack by 18 natives for a whole day, with a brace of pistols, on his grant of land which he named ‘Milton’, c.1828-29, pencil, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



This observation leads to a number of possible conclusions. One is that the TMAG drawing was not made by the eyewitness Allen, but by someone whose familiarity with Aboriginal spears was restricted to those of New South Wales. Alternatively, if this sketch is an accurate one, it suggests the attack involved Sydney Blacks, although it is highly unlikely that fishing spears would have been used for such a purpose. Thirdly, the Sydney spears may suggest a link with the attack by Mosquito, with the drawing perhaps prompted by the Aboriginal convict's hanging in 1825. Given the importance of these pictures, more research is clearly required. An inscription in ink on the reverse of the SLNSW sketch reads 'Received from Mr Allen of Bicheno by Mr Gillon Jr 16.6.80. Mr Lyne has Milton Farm now. So told by Mr Allen 3.8.80'. Also on the verso in pencil is the inscription 'John Allen, Bicheno'.<sup>463</sup> These details, not mentioned by Hansen, point to a confident attribution of the SLNSW sketch to Allen.

However, the attribution of the TMAG sketch is not so straightforward. Close examination indicates significant differences, with greater detail and more confident drawing skills apparent in shading of tree trunks, addition of tree foliage, detailing of foreground and improved perspective. Notwithstanding the key difference in spear detail, compositional similarities suggest that the TMAG sketch is highly likely to be a copy of the original by an unknown artist, or alternatively, a later version by Allen. However the possibility that Allen created a later version does not explain the significant change in spears depicted, as the particularities of Tasmanian spears were well known (at least in Tasmania). It would make more sense if this drawing was the work of a New South Wales artist.

### *Silent Markers*

A further visual record of this event can be added. In the cemetery at nearby Bicheno, Allen's gravestone memorializes his life, with a short, but heroic account of the violent incident (see fig. 74). Another such memorial can be found in the old

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<sup>463</sup> See SLNSW Record Details DL Pe 279. <http://archival-classic.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=87879>, accessed 15 August, 2016.

Anglican cemetery of Campbell Town (see fig. 75). It reads, 'Thomas Rawlings and Edward Green, inhumanely killed by natives in 1827.'<sup>464</sup> Gravestones such as these are scattered across the Tasmania in local cemeteries as a silent, visual testament to the agency of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in defending their country against invasion by settlers.

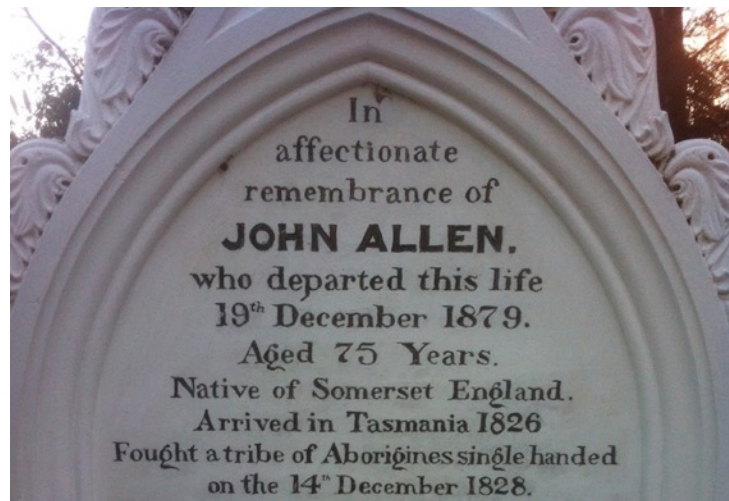


Figure 74 - Gravestone of John Allen, Bicheno Cemetery. Photo: the author.

What is not apparent from the inscriptions on these gravestones is that British deaths were often associated with reprisal attacks by local settlers or constabulary following such actions by Aborigines. As a consequence of the deaths of Rawlings and Green,

a party of the 40<sup>th</sup> Regiment and civilians went after the perpetrators. On locating them, they attacked and killed twenty or more Aborigines. An eyewitness to this attack reported that after the men were shot, women and children were massacred.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Von Steiglitz, 'A Short History of Ross: With Some Tales of the Pioneers.' p. 22.

<sup>465</sup> John Lennox and John Wadsley, *Barrack Hill: A History of Anglesea Barracks, 1811-1863* (Canberra: Defense Publishing Service, 2011). p. 38.

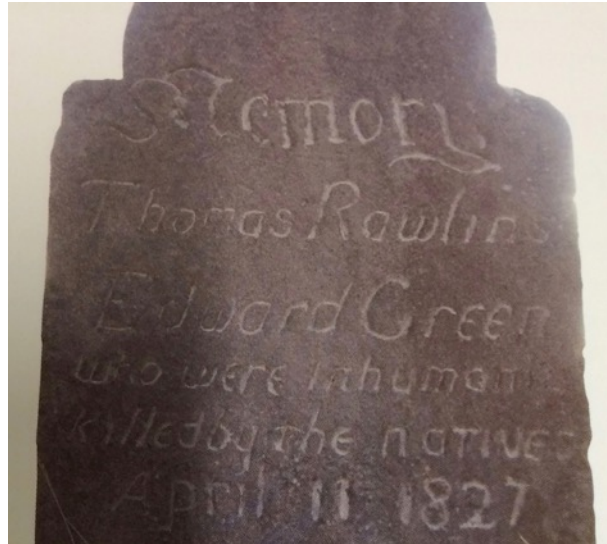


Figure 75 - *Thomas Rawlins and Edward Green Gravestone*, inscription: 'In Memory, Thomas Rawlins, Edward Green, who were inhumanely killed by the natives, April 11, 1827', from Lennox and Wadsley, 2011.

It is also known that after the attack on Milton Farm, Allen rode out with Constable William Grant and an armed party. In revenge for the loss of his crop and hut, Allen and members of the party killed an unknown number of the first group of Aborigines they came across.<sup>466</sup> Allen was granted a further two hundred acres of land in compensation by the government. As we will see later in this chapter, such grants were also to become a common reward for the removal of Aborigines.

Thirty years later, perhaps out of regret for his involvement in this massacre, Allen made a donation of ten shillings for the erection of another gravestone (fig. 76). This was to the memory of an Aboriginal woman known only as Wauba Debar. Little is known of the real identity of this woman, and the name may be apocryphal.<sup>467</sup> However, it remained significant for the Allen family. Allen's daughter Edith paid to have a fence erected around the grave in 1926 and it remains today as Tasmania's smallest State Reserve.<sup>468</sup> It is also the only known gravestone erected to a Tasmanian Aborigine during the nineteenth-century.

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<sup>466</sup> Greg Lehman, 'Aboriginal History and Culture: Bicheno Townscape Project Dossier', (Triabunna, Tasmania: East Coast Regional Development Organisation/Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, 1999). p. 2.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.



Figure 76 - Wauba Debar's Grave, Bicheno. Photo: the Author.

### *Expanding Violence*

By the mid 1820s, neither settler nor Aborigine living outside civic boundaries was secure from violence or death. Prior to 1824, conflict between settlers and Aborigines had generally been sporadic. But from 1825, attacks by Aborigines more than doubled each year.<sup>469</sup> This period is generally referred to as the 'Black War'. It culminated in 1828 with a series of proclamations by Governor Arthur declaring martial law 'against all the black or aboriginal Natives within every part of this island', and calling for Aborigines to be 'expelled by force' from the settled districts, 'by whatever means a severe necessity may dictate'.<sup>470</sup>

A commentary published in the *Colonial Times* a few years earlier illustrates the colonial sentiment culminating in the Black War,

We make no pompous display of Philanthropy—we say unequivocally—SELF DEFENCE IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST REMOVE THE NATIVES—IF NOT, THEY WILL BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS AND DESTROYED!<sup>471</sup> (emphasis in the original).

<sup>469</sup> Nicholas Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2014).

<sup>470</sup> Turnbull, *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines* at pp 243 - 54.

<sup>471</sup> Anonymous, 'Hobart Town', *The Colonial Times*, 1 December 1826.

The editorial went on to suggest a solution to the problem. It proposed that the Aborigines should be permanently removed to a detention facility on one of the isolated islands nearby, where they might 'acquire some slight habits of industry, which is the first step of civilisation'.<sup>472</sup> In a later article, the newspaper warned, 'until the aborigines are sent out of the Island ... there will be continual slaughter on both sides which no human hand can possibly prevent'.<sup>473</sup> By mid 1828, frustration at the inability of the Governor to control the increasing number of attacks on settlers was consolidating public opinion toward more drastic measures. The *Colonial Advocate* argued in May that,

unless the blacks are exterminated or removed, it is plainly proved; by fatal and sanguinary experience, that all hope of their ceasing their aggressions, is the height of absurdity.' Such calls became increasingly strident, as other newspapers called for 'annihilation of the whole race', and that 'extermination seems to be the only remedy'.<sup>474</sup>

These calls were in response to the haphazard success of pursuit parties following attacks on settlers. In late 1828, settlers were subject to an intensified series of attacks by Aborigines who seemed determined to drive the British invaders from their country. Fire was being increasingly used as a weapon, with raiding tribes burning down huts, crops and fences. Official roving parties were established as full-time patrols to search out Aboriginal people. Under the direction of local magistrates, armed parties of soldiers and police, or landholders and convicts were instructed to capture any Aborigines that were encountered, so they could be brought in and held in prisons. The problem with this approach, according to Johnson and Macfarlane, was that the roving parties 'tended to kill more Aborigines than they ever captured'.<sup>475</sup> While only the military were empowered to shoot on sight, this became common practice for settlers and their servants.

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Turnbull, *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines* at p 77.

<sup>474</sup> Cited in Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*. p. 44-5.

<sup>475</sup> Johnson and Macfarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History*. p. 137.

Over the next two years, various roving parties captured fewer than twenty or thirty Aborigines; at the same time, it is estimated that another sixty were killed.<sup>476</sup> The public reception to this initiative was increasingly negative. Settlers offered their services in exchange for grants of land, and were paid in proportion to the duration of their work, rather than by the number of Aborigines captured. Roving parties often spent long periods of time without finding any Aboriginal people. At the same time, attacks and settler deaths were escalating. A committee of inquiry was told that leaders of these parties, 'were more employed in looking for grants of land than the natives.'<sup>477</sup>

As a result of this failure, settlers began to take desperate measures to protect themselves, building high wooden stockades and stone walls around their huts, laying turf on wooden roofs to protect them from being set on fire, and building embrasures, or firing holes, into walls. The bodies of Aboriginal casualties were also used as a kind of defense, and placed prominently as warning signs to dissuade attack. Bonwick reported the actions of Mr Espie, who had established a farm near Bagdad,

One day the tribe attacked the overseer, a man of energy and tact. Quickly closing the door, and shouting loudly, he brought down one marauder with a shot. Then through holes in the slab sides of the hut he continued to fire... Waiting a while, he opened his door, and saw the coast clear. He picked up the dead body which was left, and stuck it up in the hollow of a tree, with a spear in the chin to keep it upright.<sup>478</sup>

Such grotesque use of the bodies of dead Aborigines built aggressively on the connotation of savagery and primitiveness that was evoked by the nakedness of colonized people.<sup>479</sup> The effect was to galvanise the public view that violence against Aborigines was acceptable and necessary. The display of hanged convicts and Aborigines on the gibbet in Van Diemen's Land was a regular practice in the early

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*. p. 46.

<sup>478</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 124.

<sup>479</sup> Philippa Levine, 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination', *Victorian Studies*, 50/2 (2008).

nineteenth-century.<sup>480</sup> This served as a statement of judicial power, in which ‘the displayed corpse of the lawbreaker bears the mark of justice rendered to guarantee social peace’.<sup>481</sup> Charageat and Mathieu point out that the gibbet was usually established in a recognized place in a town or city, and served to assert the boundaries of impartial justice through their association with public ritual.

Gibbets had become a commonplace feature on prominent places such as hills, or by roadsides in Europe since the Middle Ages, offering a ‘deterrent or warning effect on potential malefactors who crossed the boundary.’<sup>482</sup> However, the representation created by an Aboriginal body ‘stuck up’ in a tree, served a very different narrative purpose. In the absence of any authority or ritual, and fixed to a tree in a location dictated only by its convenience to the place of killing, Espie’s sign was one of complete disruption to normal systems of justice. Rather than underlining the power of colonial administration, action by colonists such as Espie demonstrated its failure, and pointed to the urgency for action by the Governor to quell violence on the frontier and preserve the small prospect of peace so desperately required in the colony.

The extent of such displays is undocumented, but it can be reasonably assumed that the action by Espie was not isolated. Perhaps in response to such actions by settlers, or as an independent attempt to terrify settlers, Aboriginal warriors began to use the bodies of settlers in similarly symbolic ways. Clements cites numerous examples of bodily mutilation of settlers, describing how a stock keeper ‘was literally beat to a mummy! His throat cut and his lower extremities cut off!! Indeed, he was cut to atoms’.<sup>483</sup> In another attack, the body of an assigned convict was found,

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<sup>480</sup> Richard P. Davis, *The Tasmanian Gallows: A Study of Capital Punishment* (Hobart: Cat and Fiddle Press, 1974).

<sup>481</sup> Martine Charageat and Mathieu Vivas, ‘Gibbets from the Middle Ages to Modern Times: An Interdisciplinary Method’, *Crimino Corpus* (2016). np.

<sup>482</sup> Juris Coolen, ‘Places of Justice and Awe: The Topography of Gibbets and Gallows in Medieval and Early Modern North-Western and Central Europe’, *World Archaeology*, 45/5 (2013).

<sup>483</sup> Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*. p. 104.

most dreadfully lacerated, eight spears had entered the breast, the head was bashed to pieces, the flesh of the upper lip entirely knocked off, and in every respect representing a most appalling spectacle.<sup>484</sup>

Accounts of these brutalities against settlers were printed in newspapers and, according to Clements, spread widely with rumour exaggerating the degree of violence and gore. Signs of extreme violence and mutilation had a profound effect on public sentiment. Reports also began to circulate that were even more macabre. Fischer's Colonial Magazine, published in London from 1840 to 1842, carried a lengthy report on colonial conditions in Van Diemen's Land over two volumes. The report included the following account,

The corpse became subject to mutilation – every indignity that sable vengeance could inflict being heaped upon the wretched remains. A stock-keeper, slain upon the writer's estate, presented an appalling picture of their fury. The eyes were torn out of their sockets, and waddies (sticks not unlike office-rulers) thrust into the apertures. The skull was dreadfully smashed, and the mouth filled with cow dung. It was conjectured the waddies were placed to resemble the horns of oxen, and that their revenge was emblematical of the occupation of their victim – a cattle-herd.<sup>485</sup>

The ability of Tasmanian Aborigines to make figurative use of the bodies of settlers in such a way did not only serve to induce terror amongst colonists; it transformed the perception of Aborigines from being violent savages, to demonic or magical spectres. The ability of Aborigines to suddenly emerge from concealment in the dark woods began to craft a perception of them as a supernatural foe. According to Clements, 'the blacks were (now) a mysterious race that seemed to lurk almost ghost-like in the wilderness.'<sup>486</sup> Louisa Anne Meredith described an attack by a group of natives who, armed with flaming spears, had climbed trees in order to burn the home of a settler. Upon the arrival of a detachment of soldiers, 'the instant they were seen, the whole

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid. p. 104.

<sup>485</sup> Robert Montgomery Martin, 'Van Diemen's Land; Moral Physical and Political', *The Colonial Magazine and Commercial-maritime Journal*, 2/May to August (1840). p. 76.

<sup>486</sup> Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*. p. 105.



besieging army of natives *vanished* – rapidly and silently as the shadows of a hideous dream.’<sup>487</sup>

### *The Appropriation of Self-representation*

At the same time as Aborigines were taking on Satanic dimensions in the paranoid minds of mostly illiterate settlers, the government was developing a more sophisticated understanding of their enemy. Reports were coming in from surveyors indicating aspects of Aboriginal culture that were entirely new to the British. Van Diemen’s Land Company (Van Diemen’s Land Co.) Surveyor Henry Hellyer, travelling through the Surrey Hills in February 1827, recorded in his journal the presence of numerous Aboriginal huts. Inside one of the huts his inspection revealed,

a drawing of the moon, done with charcoal, upon the inside of one of the slabs of bark which formed the hut; and regarding it as evidence of there being artists amongst them, I cut out the piece and placed it carefully between two other pieces of bark in my knapsack.<sup>488</sup>

Hellyer returned with Assistant Surveyor Joseph Fossey in October 1828 and made further notes of Aboriginal drawings of ‘men, kangaroos, emus and other creatures’. In acknowledgement, he named the locality ‘Painter’s Plains’.<sup>489</sup> In January, 1829, two months after the proclamation of Martial Law, Governor Arthur and the Surveyor General of Van Diemen’s Land, George Frankland travelled to the Surrey Hills to inspect the area’s potential for grazing and to consider requests from the Van Diemen’s Land Co. for extensive land grants. It was during this journey that Frankland, himself a devotee of the arts, is likely to have noted from either Fossey or Hellyer that Aborigines were fluent in the practice of visual representation of the world around them. More particularly, they had been noted to draw pictures of the British. The following month, Frankland wrote to Governor Arthur to advise he had become aware that,

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<sup>487</sup> Louisa Anne Merideth, *My Home in Tasmania* (1858). p. 84

<sup>488</sup> Cited in C. J. Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania* (Launceston: Mary Fisher Bookshop, 1980). p. 65.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

Natives of Van Diemen's Land are in the habit of representing events by drawings on the bark of Trees. The Carts, the Bullocks, the Men, were distinctly represented, according to the exact number that really existed.<sup>490</sup>

Frankland pointed to the administration's inability to communicate with Aboriginal people, due to a lack of knowledge of the several languages spoken on the island. He suggested that, as a solution, 'through the Medium of this newly discovered Faculty,' the Governor could make known his desire for a peaceful end to conflict. Frankland added,

I have accordingly sketched a series of groups of Figures, in which I have endeavored to represent in a manner as simple and as well adapted to their supposed ideas, as possible, the actual state of things (or rather the origin of the present state) and the desired termination of Hostility.<sup>491</sup>

The Surveyor General recommended his approach as an inexpensive and convenient solution, if multiple copies were to be made and nailed to trees in remote locations where they were likely to be seen by Aborigines. This proposal languished for another year until the Governor, buoyed by a report of friendly relations being established with a mob of Aborigines near Bothwell, latched onto the idea of improving communications with the natives. Arthur offered a 'handsome reward to any individual who shall effect a successful intercourse with any tribe.'<sup>492</sup> Shortly after, the Governor had agreed to support Frankland's proposal, authorizing the production of a large number of painted boards (see fig. 77) for a campaign that James Bonwick described, in derisory terms, as an 'expedition against the Aborigines on the principles of the Fine Arts... to hang up in the Bush divers illustrations of retributive

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<sup>490</sup> Cited in Eustace Fitzsymonds (ed.), *Connoisseurs in Paintings: George Frankland and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land* (Adelaide: Janes Dally, 2001). p. 18. See also Roth et al., *The Aborigines of Tasmania* p. 137 for reference to the original record of these drawings.

<sup>491</sup> Fitzsymonds (ed.), *Connoisseurs in Paintings: George Frankland and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 19.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

justice for the edification of parrots, possums, and Black Fellows.<sup>493</sup> Bonwick's assessment reflected the reaction from newspapers at the time, which generally demanded more direct and assertive measures.

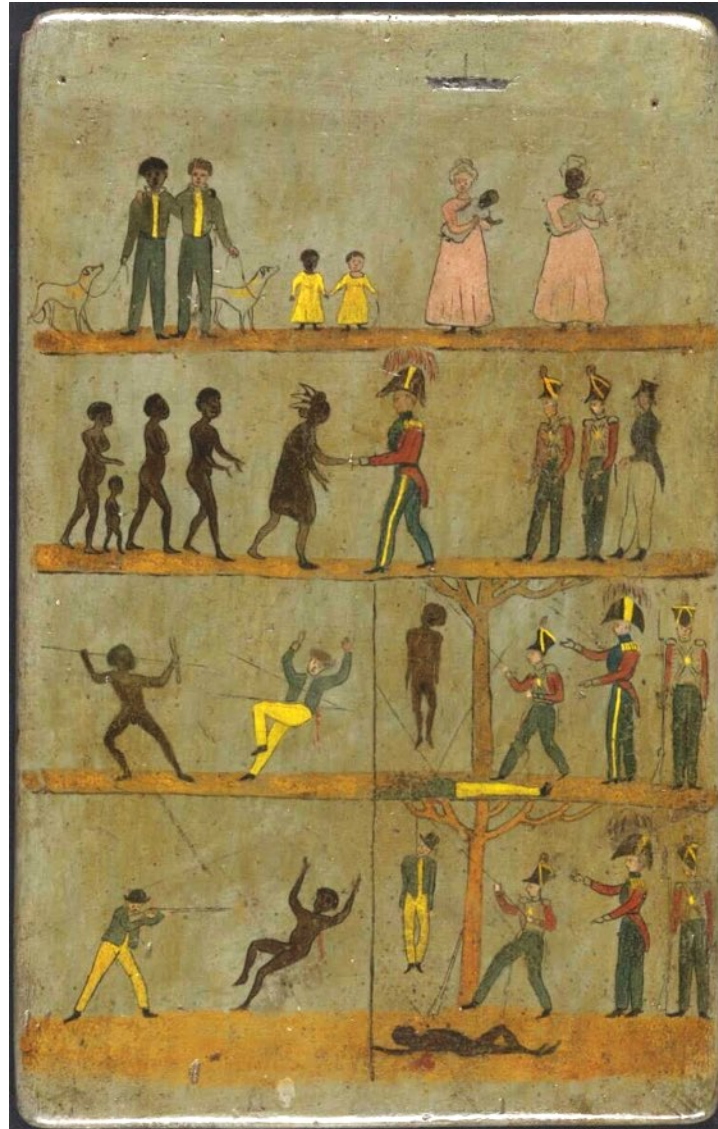


Figure 77 - *Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aborigines 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, 1828*, oil on wood panel. Inscription on verso: 'Why – Massa Gubernor' – said Black Jack – "You Proflamation all gammon, how blackfellow read him? – eh! He no read him book." "Read that then," said the Governor, pointing to a picture. 1 June, 1836.' National Library of Australia.

The inscription on the back of a Proclamation Board held by the National Library of Australia (one of seven known to have survived),<sup>494</sup> is of unknown authenticity. There

<sup>493</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 83.

<sup>494</sup> Other boards are held in the collections at the TMAG, Museum of Victoria, SLNSW, NLA, Cambridge and Harvard Universities; see Edmonds, 'Failing in Every Endeavour to

is, however, an account of the Aboriginal chief Eumarrah being presented with a board by Frankland. The newspaper reported that when the chief was given a board, it was 'prized very highly, he spoke of it repeatedly, and carried it with him when he went away.'<sup>495</sup> However, there is no record to indicate how legible or meaningful the boards were to Aboriginal people.

The only identifiable figure on the board is the Governor Arthur, seen in the upper-centre, shaking hands with an Aboriginal chief – both of them exemplified by feathered headdress. The Governor is also seen presiding over the hanging of an Aborigine for the spearing of a settler, and the hanging of a settler for the shooting of an Aborigine. This promise of impartial justice proved to be hollow. While several Aborigines were hung in this manner, no European was ever hung for the death of an Aboriginal person in Van Diemen's Land. In fact, no European was ever charged or convicted of murdering, or even assaulting an Aborigine.<sup>496</sup>

Nevertheless, the central vignette of the handshake is of key importance in the design of the boards. Edmonds<sup>497</sup> sees this as a potent symbol preceded by similar designs on British antislavery and American peace medals. While she does not point to any direct correlation between medals from North America and the Proclamation Boards, Edmonds sees 'an emergent vernacular at work' relating to liberal humanism on one hand, and governance of Aboriginal people on the other. Governor Arthur's previous vice-regal appointments had been in British Honduras and Jamaica, ensuring his appreciation of the resonance of the anti-slavery movement, which were to result in the banning of slavery in British colonies in 1833. She reads the handshake as an act of introduction, as well as 'closure'. With the inherent promise of fair treatment under British law, the handshake would draw Aborigines into the compact of legal protection, inferring reciprocal obligations on their part. In this way the boards served as a pictorial treaty with Aborigines. Given that the boards, nailed to trees across the

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Conciliate: Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines, Australian Conciliation Narratives and Their Transnational Connections'. p. 204.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. p. 214.

<sup>496</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 78.

<sup>497</sup> Edmonds, 'Failing in Every Endeavour to Conciliate: Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines, Australian Conciliation Narratives and Their Transnational Connections'. p. 209.

colony, would have been equally visible to settlers, they also served as a reminder of the expectations of justice by the Governor for all subjects of the Crown. In this light, the boards also served the same purpose as an array of gibbets.

At a time of Martial Law in the colony, the Proclamation Boards were a counterpoint to the visual manifestations of frontier violence – especially the display of mutilated bodies. The boards ‘stood in’ for the public gibbet, providing a pictorial representation of public ceremony and judicial process amidst the almost unrestrained violence that was legitimated by Arthur’s proclamation of Martial Law. Julie Evans points to this as a process of creating ‘a space of legal violence’,<sup>498</sup> which was ultimately aimed at establishing colonial sovereignty over Aborigines. However, this assurance of equality before the law was as hollow as any other promise implied by the boards’ message,

Sovereignty was also influenced in fundamental ways by Europe’s earlier encounters with native peoples abroad from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Within this model, sovereignty doctrine is implicitly and indelibly bound to colonialism. For in seeking to legitimate the dominion of the New World, early writings by European jurists and theologians had already pronounced that Indians could not be sovereigns.<sup>499</sup>

Patrick Wolfe argues this in terms of a ‘logic of elimination’. Unlike contexts in which colonial justice must find a place for slaves, in whom settlers have an economic interest, the objective in colonial locations such as Van Diemen’s Land was to simply suppress Indigenous presence.<sup>500</sup> The parallel of the Proclamation Board’s handshake with American peace medals argued by Edmonds is particularly relevant in this respect. She points to the example of the Thomas Jefferson peace medal, awarded to Indians as a mark of friendship. These conferred no power, instead referring to

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<sup>498</sup> Julie Evans, 'Where Lawlessness Is Law: The Settler-Colonial Frontier as a Legal Space of Violence', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 30/June (2009). p. 5.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 6.

'relations of peace and conciliation (that) were highly coercive.'<sup>501</sup> The effect of the boards could only be to draw Aborigines into a sovereign system within which their rights had already been extinguished.

Frankland's strategy also counted on Aboriginal receptivity to both the mode and the legibility of the intended message. This assumption was perhaps the greatest risk taken by the Governor in supporting the project. Some authors have dismissed the possibility of achieving communication with Aborigines using the boards. Johnson and McFarlane go too far; the Governor's initiative, they say 'was a ridiculous gesture, with the depictions of right and wrong having little meaning for the Aborigines.'<sup>502</sup>

Von Zinnenberg Carroll states that there are no records of Aboriginal reaction to the boards.<sup>503</sup> As discussed above, this is not the case, although both the account of Eumarrah's attachment to the board he was given, and the conversation between the Governor and Black Jack may be apocryphal or at least distorted by optimism. Ryan refers to two occasions when the boards were shown to Aborigines, but does not detail these.<sup>504</sup> FitzSymonds cites a record from August 1830 of Major Abbott writing to the Governor from Launceston to advise that he had,

endeavoured to explain to the Natives the figures on the boards, which you forwarded to me; and shook hands with them on parting; they appeared all well disposed and friendly.<sup>505</sup>

Whether such an explanation might have been rehearsed between Frankland and the Governor and communicated to officers such as Abbott in an effort to standardize this process of explanation is unknown. In the absence of written instructions, those

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<sup>501</sup> Edmonds, 'Failing in Every Endeavour to Conciliate: Governor Arthur's Proclamation Boards to the Aborigines, Australian Conciliation Narratives and Their Transnational Connections'. p. 212.

<sup>502</sup> Johnson and Macfarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History*. p. 135.

<sup>503</sup> Khadija Von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Art in a Time of Colony* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014).

<sup>504</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. loc cit.

<sup>505</sup> Fitzsymonds (ed.), *Connoisseurs in Paintings: George Frankland and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 22.

charged with interlocation were probably left to their own interpretive devices; making the objective of communication of the meaning of the boards across a vast cultural divide even more fraught.

The visual rhetoric of the boards is complex. The upper panel presents a scene of assimilation, in which all figures, black and white, are clothed, have dogs, and share in the duties of parenting. By showing black mothers with white babies and vice versa, it may also be read either as an encouragement of shared nursing, or a treatise on intermarriage. In this section, individuals are extracted from their respective communities (of settler and Aborigine) and shown as equal. However, with the black figures dressed in clothes, it is also a statement of the dominant role of British culture in a transaction of assimilation. The panels immediately below indicate a meeting of black and white, but this time the figures are shown as distinct communities, Aboriginal family members without clothes, and a group of British men in uniform.

Read from left to right, the panel is an acknowledgement of political authority and power. Thus, the top half of the board establishes the conditions under which the application of justice would be applied to Aborigine and settler alike. The two panels below must also be read from left to right if they are to convey the intended message of equal treatment before the law, and imply the conditions depicted above as a prerequisite. However, without any evidence that Aborigines shared, or understood the conventions of directionality Frankland had based his images on, there is no assurance that the messages could be clear. Read in a right to left direction, the process of sanctioned violence could be interpreted in some of the series of figures as an encouragement for Aborigines to carry out attacks of retribution!

The subject of Aboriginal reception is critical to any consideration of the board's contribution. Von Zinnenberg Carroll cites Bertolt Brecht's notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* or defamiliarization/estrangement to refer to the act of mimicry by Frankland of Aboriginal bark drawings.<sup>506</sup> The Governor's desire to propagandise a set of relations, so far unseen by Aborigines, by the reference to a mode of Aboriginal visual communication that was only superficially understood by the

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<sup>506</sup> Von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Art in a Time of Colony*. p. 88.

surveyors who had seen them, was ambitious at the very least. The ability of Aborigines to decode the meaning of the pictograms may have been overwhelmed by a disinclination borne of alienation at seeing these figures placed in trees. The meaning of images of bodies hung on British gallows was probably compounded by association with the display of mutilated Aboriginal and settler bodies that was at the same time occurring across the colony.

By any measure the success of the proclamation boards was negligible. After a lull in attacks during the winter of 1830, more settler deaths were soon being reported.<sup>507</sup> This was no doubt due to a number of factors. Important amongst these is the relatively small number of boards<sup>508</sup> (less than one hundred), nailed to trees across a colony half the size of England. It is not known if they were effectively placed in locations where they would be seen by Aborigines. Neither is it known whether, once nailed up, they remained in place for very long. Most importantly, Aboriginal deaths at the hands of settlers were still occurring, with any threat of prosecution explicitly suspended by the imposition of Martial Law. According to Desmond Maderson, 'ironically, the proclamation did not establish the rule of law in Tasmania; it justified its exception.'<sup>509</sup>

The Proclamation Boards were not so much a statement of how things were, but rather, how they might be once the processes of assimilation and the establishment of British sovereignty were complete. As pictures, they were intended to carry a density of ideas across a cultural communication divide. However, the potential for them to be read in a non-linear structure also created potential for them to harbor paradox and ambiguity. With no guarantee of consistent understanding across their intended audience, the message of Frankland's proclamation boards was at best a fiction.

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<sup>507</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 115.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>509</sup> Desmond Maderson, 'Not Yet: Aboriginal People and the Deferral of the Rule of Law', *Arena*, 29/30 (2008).



## *The Black Line*

If Governor Arthur was to bring peace to the colony, more decisive measures were clearly required. His next significant step was to extend Martial Law to the whole island in October 1830. Around the same time, he also urged colonists to mobilise *en masse* in an operation that was to become known as the Black Line. The objective was to separate Aborigines and colonists completely. Arthur's ambitious plan involved stretching a line of police, military, free settlers and convicts across the entirety of the settled districts, and driving Aborigines southwards toward a narrow isthmus called Eaglehawk Neck, where they would be captured and removed. Frankland was instrumental in the preparations for the Black Line, preparing another key visual record of the period.

Frankland's map (see fig. 78) is a key component in the sequence of visual elements that continued to articulate the trope of absence with respect to Aboriginal people in Tasmania. The map not only describes the planned progress of a military campaign, it also served as a reassurance to administrators and officers that their determination could be exerted across the landscape in exactly the same way as the line could be stretched between each successive rallying point on the chart. Frankland's *Field Plan of Military Operations Against the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land* was unlike any previous map of the island. Previous maps were limited to detailing coastlines and key topographical features such as mountain ranges and rivers; and inscribing them English place names as evidence of British dominion. This map went further, suggesting that colonial endeavor was so irresistible that it could be literally drawn, unimpeded, across the entire landscape; sweeping all Aborigines before it. The mountainous ridges, and deep gullies, unexplored valleys and featureless tracts that had yet to be penetrated by the Governor's surveyors were all to yield to a purposeful front marking the inexorable progress over six weeks of an armed body of two thousand two hundred men.

The importance of the map as a colonial instrument was cemented with its publication by the British House of Commons in 1831.<sup>510</sup> However, like Frankland's Proclamation Boards, the Black Line map remains ambiguous and only partially

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<sup>510</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 275.

resolved as a presence in Tasmania's visual archive. Seldom considered alongside artworks or graphic depictions such as the Proclamation Boards, it remains, as David Blayney Brown describes maps and their relationships to power, subjective and vulnerable,

They depict transient politics as geopolitical fact. Erasing regional, ethnic or religious differences, and indigenous concepts of land and space, redrawing borders, inscribing ownership... putting down markers for later nation-building that (are) themselves contested.<sup>511</sup>

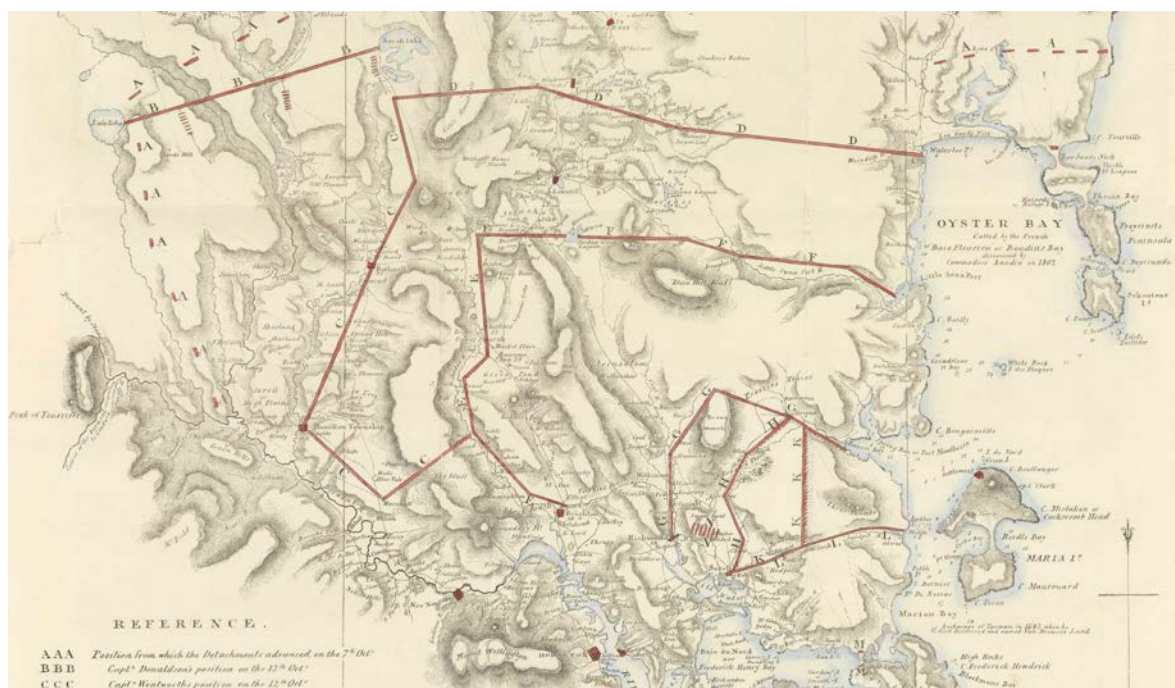


Figure 78 - George Frankland, Surveyor General, *Field Plan of Military Operations Against the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land*, 1831 (detail) National Library of Australia.

The Black Line was a defining campaign for Van Diemen's Land. It illustrated the belief, if not the ability of the British to over-run the territory that it most urgently needed to define as its own by removing a violent reminder that its assertion of sovereignty was contested.

<sup>511</sup> David Blayney Brown, 'Mapping and Marking', in Alison Smith, David Blayney Brown, and Carol Jacobi (eds.), *Artist and Empire* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015). p. 15.

Like Frankland's Proclamation Boards, the fact of the military plan's intention obscures the complexity of its legacy. Ultimately, the Black Line failed to achieve the Governor's objectives. Frankland's grand cartographic masterpiece was poorly translated into a form that was of little value in negotiating the realities of Tasmania's rough terrain. According to Cave, groups of men had to rely on a compass, or their memory of the local landscape, and such knowledge was not always available. 'Party leaders were issued with maps; however, they were inaccurate and incomplete'.<sup>512</sup> In addition to an inability to maintain movement in the required formation, members of the line were beset with conflicting orders, poor equipment, bad weather and a lack of detailed instructions from any authority on how the operation should progress. Even if the many parties forming the Line had been able to sight any Aborigines by their smokes, it would have been difficult to maintain any element of surprise.

Aside from shouting and coo-ees, other parties shot kangaroos and birds for sport and for supper. Other men fired volleys when they were lost, or out of boredom, or triggered by false alarms, which gathered men from all nearby parties, whilst simultaneously sending a clear signal to anybody miles around of their presence.<sup>513</sup>

Only two Aborigines were captured and the idea of corralling four Aboriginal nations onto the Forestier Peninsula, where they could be prevented from returning to their own country by cordoning off a narrow isthmus of land, proved to be misconceived and abortive. Half the colony's annual budget was expended for little apparent result. Lyndall Ryan argues that the event embarrassed Tasmanian historians from the nineteenth-century onwards. The Black Line was considered by Henry Melville in 1875 as an expensive aberration, and by Lloyd Robson in the 1980s as a 'catastrophic failure'.<sup>514</sup> However, Ryan also argues that the Black Line did result in widespread displacement of Aborigines from the settled districts, and soon afterwards, the surrender of most of those people remaining on their country. By these measures, it indirectly succeeded in achieving Governor Arthur's aim. However, the campaign has continued to be perceived in popular historical consciousness as an embarrassment.

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<sup>512</sup> Eleanor Cave, 'Journal During the Expedition against the Blacks: Robert Lawrence's Xperience on the Black Line', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 37/1 (2013). p. 38.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>514</sup> Cited in Lyndall Ryan, 'The Black Line in Tasmania: Success or Failure?', *ibid.* p. 3.

It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that the frontier war in Van Diemen's Land remains ignored in official commemoration of Tasmania's history of involvement in war to this day.<sup>515</sup> Tasmania's Black Line also serves as an exemplar of British colonial practice at the time. Reminding us as Ryan observes, that,

The Black Line was a normal part of British imperial policy at the time and that other Indigenous peoples across the Empire suffered a similar dreadful fate... the history of colonial Tasmania (should be) reconsidered within its imperial context and more clearly connected with the fate of Indigenous peoples in other parts of the Empire.<sup>516</sup>

Despite its problematic outcomes, the Black Line served at the time as a rallying call to almost the entire European population of the colony to unite together with a common purpose of removing Aborigines – not only from interfering in the enjoyment of their land grants – but in banishing them completely from their lives. At the time, enthusiasm for the war with Aborigines was widespread. John West recorded how the citizens of Hobart Town were caught up in a state of 'martial ardour',

Thus, like the warriors of the heroic age, they debated before they armed ... More busy civilians were anxious to the formality in incorporation, and the gradations of command. The townspeople were allowed their choice between more active service or garrison duties.<sup>517</sup>

Henry Melville observed that,

During the advance of the lines, the despatches received and sent equalled those forwarded by the allied armies during the last European war – in fact – everything was carried on as if it were a great war in miniature.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> See Lehman, 'Tasmanian Gothic: The Art of Australia's Forgotten War'.

<sup>516</sup> Ryan, 'The Black Line in Tasmania: Success or Failure?'. p. 18.

<sup>517</sup> Cited in Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*. p. 110.

<sup>518</sup> Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824 to 1835 Inclusive During the Administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur (in 3 Parts)*. p. 96-97.

In this way, the Black Line served as a concrete and popular manifestation of the widespread desire for Tasmanian Aborigines to be removed from settlers' lives.

### *The Friendly Mission*

Almost exactly a year after the Governor had accepted Frankland's suggestion of producing the Proclamation Boards, he issued a Government Order in February 1830 offering 'a handsome reward to any individual who shall effect a successful intercourse with any tribe.' The Order went on to urge that, 'no opportunity should be lost to draw any Tribe into terms of conciliation, and no effort should be spared to expel those who will not be conciliated.'<sup>519</sup>

George Augustus Robinson, a London bricklayer who had arrived in the colony in 1824, was an enthusiastic respondent to Arthur's conciliation plan. Robinson had been appointed in March of 1829 to convert a ration station that had been established on Bruny Island into a mission, where it was hoped that local Aborigines, along with those captured by military operations, could be educated and 'civilised' into colonial life. The Bruny Mission was a failure, with many of the Aborigines held there perishing from disease within months. Despite this, Robinson succeeded in convincing the Governor to support a more ambitious plan. The ambitious builder had begun to learn a little of the Aboriginal languages spoken around him. He was also intensely interested in their culture. Robinson noted for himself three key motivations in his friendly interest in Tasmanian Aborigines,

- A missionary desire to benefit this position of the human race
- To benefit this land of my adoption, by endeavoring to stay that effusion of human blood which had and was still carrying on between the Black and White Inhabitants with such bitter animosity and rancor
- To become acquainted with the history, manners, and language of this interesting portion of the human race, particularly as very little or nothing was

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<sup>519</sup> Cited by Fitzsymonds (ed.), *Connoisseurs in Paintings: George Frankland and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 21.

known about them especially as I had entertained an impression that this Race would ultimately and at no distant period become extinct.<sup>520</sup>

His Evangelical Christianity compelled in him a close interest in the humanity of the Aborigines; a sentiment that appealed to the Governor, who agreed in December 1830 to fund Robinson's plan. Two months later, Robinson set off with several Aborigines from the Bruny Mission, and a party of assigned convicts to travel beyond the southern frontier 'for the purpose of endeavoring to effect an amicable understanding with the aborigines in that quarter, and through them, with the tribes of the interior.'<sup>521</sup> According to Ryan, Robinson's ambition was to contact every Aborigine still living outside the settled districts. Over the next four years, he made several expeditions throughout the south and western regions, the northwest and northeast of the island. His enthusiasm to promote his own achievements, as well as his interest in the culture of Tasmanian Aborigines, resulted in a detailed set of journals.

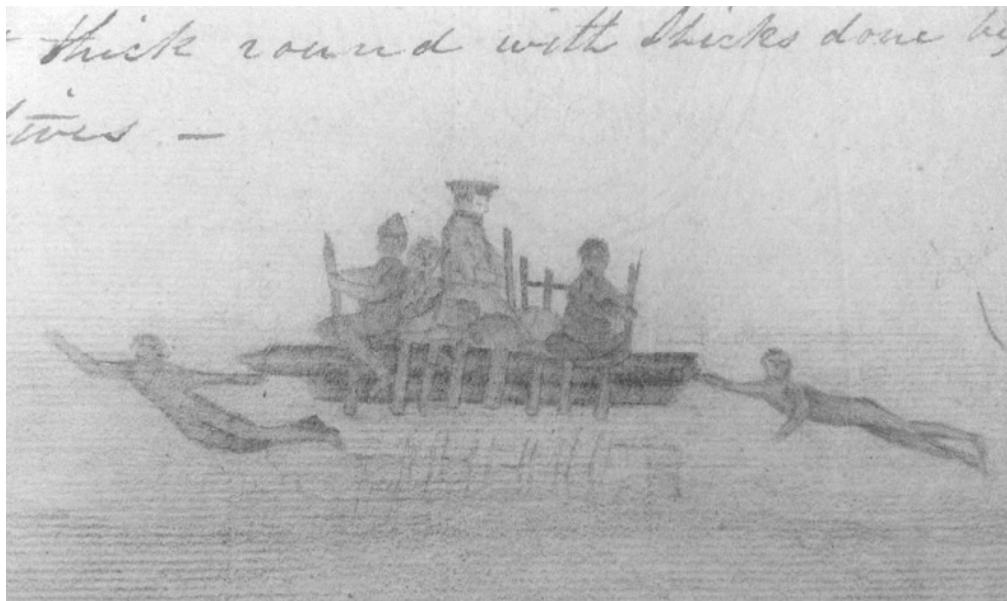


Figure 78 - George Augustus Robinson, *Raft of Driftwood*, 10 June, 1830 (detail from journal page), State Library of New South Wales. Photo: the author.

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<sup>520</sup> Cited in Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars*. p. 132.

<sup>521</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 158.

These journals, first edited and published in 1966 by Director of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Norman James Brian Plomley, provide the most detailed collection of observations and interpretations of Aboriginal life during this period.<sup>522</sup> Amongst the volumes, held in the collections of the SLNSW and the British Museum, are numerous sketches that are among very few visual records made by artists of Tasmanian Aborigines on their own country.

Many of Robinson's sketches relate to his own activities while travelling with the guidance of Aborigines in his party around the island on his conciliatory mission. In one drawing, Robinson shows himself being ferried across a river (see fig. 78). In the sketch, he is seated on a raft as if perched on a floating royal litter. Aboriginal women swim alongside, propelling him forward.<sup>523</sup> Another drawing records an important meeting between Robinson and the chief of the Toogee people, with whom Robinson would seek to reach an agreement to leave their country and accept the protection of the Governor (see fig. 79). The accompanying journal text offers much more than a simple identification of the place and identity of the figures. It enables a unique glimpse into the ontology of the Toogee people and the unstable location of Europeans in their world,

On ascending the hill we were met by two tall aborigines. Each of these men were at least six feet in height and stout and well proportioned. They were named NEEN.NE.VUTH.ER and TOW.TER.RER and were the stoutest men in the tribe. They stood on the crown of the hill, holding in their hands a waddy with which they had been ahunting. Over their shoulders hung a kangaroo mantle. I made toward them with some difficulty... I called to them as I approached. As soon as I came within hearing, they called to the young woman accompanying me who belonged to their tribe, to know if there were any 'NUM' (white men), for they did not seem to heed me. A sullenness hung over their countenance and when I spoke, they would not answer. As soon as the young women acquainted them that there was no NUM, they became cheerful and approached me and shook hands.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834* / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. p. 171.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

Other sketches offer rare insights into the appearance, technology and ceremony of Aborigines; showing the construction of huts, canoes, and hunting practices. A small sketch of a funeral pyre<sup>525</sup> is the only visual record of such a structure or event known to exist (see fig. 80).



Figure 79 - George Augustus Robinson, *Meeting with NEEN.NE.VUTH.ER and TOW.TER.RER*, 25 March, 1830, State Library of New South Wales. Photo: the author.

The human figure set atop a wooden framework, with smoke and flames interwoven with Robinson's handwriting evokes a powerful juxtaposition of competing eschatologies – one representing the treatment of the body at death, which Aborigines believed would move onto another existence<sup>526</sup> – the other evidence of Robinson's desire to leave a lasting legacy of his own life's achievement through authorship of a diary.

Each of these drawings is associated with text recording the events of the day, often adding descriptive detail to the accompanying sketch and enabling a potentially rich context for further research and interpretation. To date, Robinson's sketches have

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. p. 636.

<sup>526</sup> See Roth et al., *The Aborigines of Tasmania*



appeared only as visual accoutrements to the publication of his journals. They are yet to be subject to a visual anthropological, or thorough art historical analysis.

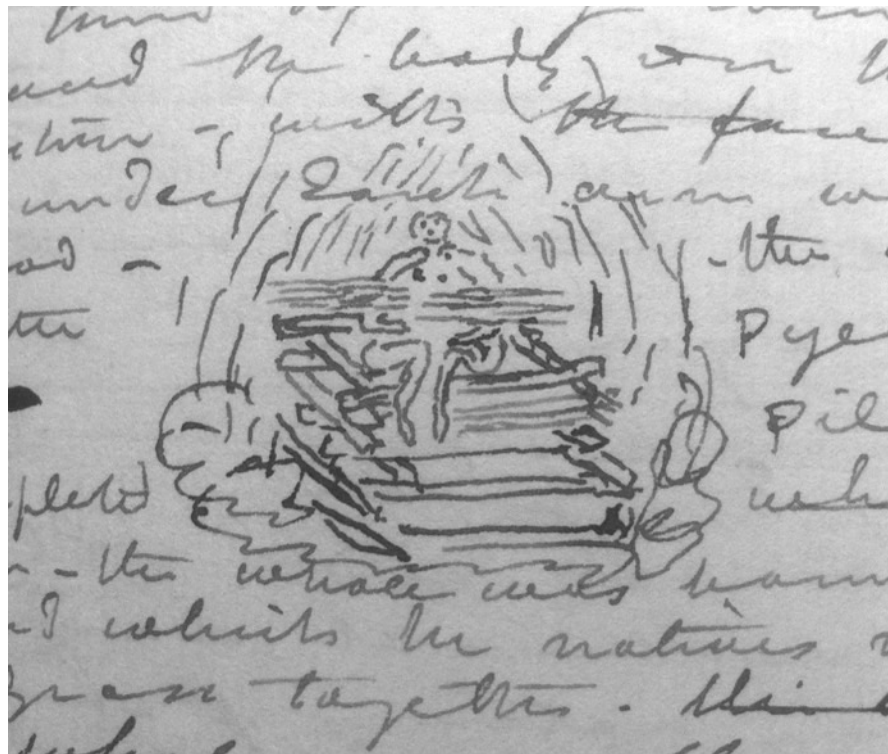


Figure 80 - George Augustus Robinson, *Funeral Pyre*, 30 July, 1832, Arthur River. State Library of New South Wales. Photo: the author.

For all of Robinson's Evangelical enthusiasm to offer the Aborigines a 'better' Christian life, and to work with the Governor to prevent further fatal contact with settlers, he too displayed the same mercenary interest as the leaders of the roving parties in his desire for land as reward for services to Governor Arthur. Even before he had completed his conciliation expeditions, Robinson was reveling in these rewards and planning his fortune. In his journal of 13 October 1831, he wrote about a grant of 2,560 acres that he had recently been awarded,

I will offer the land at 10/- per acre, to be paid by instalments in three years on good security and interest of ten percent, or £1,000 in twelve months with interest.<sup>527</sup>

<sup>527</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834* / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley. p. 484.

Earlier that month, Robinson records his enthusiasm for even greater dividends,

A settler named Gurlay, who is a monied man and has two maximum grants at the Eastern Marshes, said if I succeeded in getting the natives I ought to have £20,000, and he would put down his £100. He has a large property.<sup>528</sup>

Some in Van Diemen's Land were reserved in acknowledging Robinson's achievement, expressing concern for the consequences to be suffered by the Aborigines he was so determined to help. Henry Melville, editor of Hobart's *Colonial Times* wrote in his *History of Van Diemen's Land* that Robinson's efforts were 'crowned with success; and so that the evil has been removed, it may appear of little consequence in what way it may have been effected'.<sup>529</sup> However, there is ample evidence that the colonists' appreciation was widespread. It was reported in the *Sydney Gazette* and *New South Wales Advertiser*:

So impressed are the colonists of Van Diemen's Land, with the inestimable services conferred on them by Mr. Robinson in removing the Aborigines to Flinder's Island, that subscriptions were about to be entered into for the purpose of erecting a testimonial to him, in token of the general security of life and increased value of property which the colonists enjoy through his exertions. The three Banks at Hobart Town, with their branches at Launceston; the Aboriginal Committee, and some influential private individuals, had opened Subscription Lists for this purpose.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid. p. 483.

<sup>529</sup> Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824 to 1835 Inclusive During the Administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur (in 3 Parts)*. p 38-39

<sup>530</sup> Anonymous, *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 1 December 1833 p. p.2.



Figure 81 - Joseph Forrester, *Bothwell Cup*, 1835, engraved silver, QVMAG (left); Charles Jones, *Presentation Cup*, c.1850, engraved silver, Sotheby's Australia (right).

While the outcome of this subscription is not known, the gratitude of the inhabitants of Bothwell was made clearly evident in 1835 when they commissioned Hobart watchmaker David Barclay to have a presentation cup produced for Robinson (see fig. 81). Made by silversmith Joseph Forrester, Barclay's assigned convict, the cup became a handsome addition to Robinson's booty. It was of simple design. Unlike other presentation cups made around the time by Barclay's staff, there were neither native animals featured nor, perhaps surprisingly, any Aborigines.

Charles Jones, who worked for Barclay at the same time as Joseph Forrester, also made a cup to commemorate the efforts of James Grant in building a road from Avoca to Falmouth. This cup featured a coat of arms flanked by two Aborigines, standing on a bough engraved 'Stand Fast'.<sup>531</sup> The absence of Aborigines on the Forrester cup may have been a consequence of a desire for a low-cost design. Alternatively, it may be another example of the distaste for visual representations of Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land that characterized the first half of the nineteenth-century. Their appearance on the Jones cup fifteen years later however, is consistent with the rapid

<sup>531</sup> Sotheby's Australia Auction Catalogue, 5-6 April, 2011, <http://www.sothebysaustralia.com.au/list/DECORATIVEARTS2/309>

acceptance of Tasmanian Aborigines in the colony's visual arts that began to occur almost immediately following the end of the Black War.

Robinson's expeditions between March 1830 and April 1834 resulted in fourteen major meetings with Aboriginal tribes across the island. At each of these, Robinson was assisted by the Aborigines travelling with him in convincing those he met that further resistance would only result in their deaths, and that only he could provide them with protection. According to Reynolds, 'having fought a patriotic war, the Tasmanians knew they must negotiate.'<sup>532</sup> The terms Robinson offered must have seemed generous. In return for agreeing to be sent to an island,

they would be secure from the attack of the depraved portion of the white population and where they would enjoy uninterrupted tranquility in the society of their kindred and friends, their wants and necessities were to be amply supplied in addition to which they were to enjoy their native amusements.<sup>533</sup>

During 1831 Robinson established a series of mission camps. The first was a temporary bush camp on Swan Island; little more than a staging post for Aborigines that had been brought in by his expeditions. After three months, this was moved via Preservation Island to Guncarriage Island, which had been a headquarters for sealers operating in the area; many of who had stolen or traded Aboriginal women as labourers, concubines and, in some cases, wives.<sup>534</sup> With the Governor's authority, Robinson ordered the sealers off the island and removed the Aboriginal women into his custody. Known as the 'Aboriginal Establishment', the mission on Guncarriage Island was sketched (along with Preservation Is.) by the convict surveyor and architect, Henry Laing (1803-1842), who had been enlisted by Robinson as his clerk (see fig. 82). These are the only known images of the Aboriginal Establishment before it was eventually relocated to Wybalenna, on Flinders Island.

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<sup>532</sup> Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars*. p. 151.

<sup>533</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834 / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley*. p. 941.

<sup>534</sup> Cameron, *Grease and Ochre: The Blending of Two Cultures at the Colonial Sea Frontier*.



Figure 82 - Henry Laing, *Untitled*, 1831, watercolour, A view from Guncarriage Island with an inscription key showing the locations of Cape Barren, Long, Woody and Tin Kettle Islands (above); *The Residence of James Munro, Preservation Island*, 1831, watercolour (below) British Museum.

The Aboriginal Establishment was to be Robinson's major achievement, and as Commandant, he would be paid well by the Governor. However, before further work could be done on this, Robinson was required by the Governor to bring in the Big River Mob, who remained at large in the settled districts and were the source of continuing threats to the colonists, due to 'their bitter and unrelenting animosity... against the white population.'<sup>535</sup> Robinson had secured key agreements with two influential chiefs being held on Guncarriage Island. Over the coming months, together

<sup>535</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834* / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley. p. 469.

with a party of eleven other Aborigines from his mission, his son, three convicts, a clerk, two horses and several dogs, he travelled in search of the Big River Mob, which was made up of the remains of the tribes who had inhabited the south east (Oyster Bay) and the central highlands (Big River). On 30 December 1831, Robinson eventually spotted native smoke.<sup>536</sup> This proved to be a group of twenty-six men and women, including one child, led by chiefs Tongerlongter and Montpeliater. The group were all that remained of at least a dozen indigenous nations occupying the central and south east regions of the island; nations who had enjoyed uninterrupted use of their country for a thousand generations or more. While a few of their family members had survived the depredations of bushrangers, settler massacres and killing or capture by roving parties, to end up labouring with settler families or being absorbed into the colonial melting pot, the Big River Mob were the last to hold out against the British invasion.

Nearby their place of meeting, Robinson recorded the presence of an Aboriginal hut,

the interior of which was decorated with an assemblage of rude sketches representing birds, beasts, human forms, &c, and were for the most part tolerably executed.<sup>537</sup>

There is no record of Robinson inquiring about the meaning of the pictograms. This is a great shame, as these images were no doubt the last Aboriginal visual history to be recorded *in situ* of the tumultuous events that had been sweeping through the lives of the people gathered there. Robinson was more concerned with what was to be his most important meeting. This was the largest group that had surrendered at any one time, and would result in the Governor approving his ambitious plans for a larger Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island where the Big River Mob were soon to be exiled, and where most would die.

Robinson's disinterest in the Aboriginal drawings marks a tragic irony. The indigenous pictorial record was being ignored, yet events were in motion that would

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid. p. 569.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. p. 571.

result in the meeting becoming the subject of one of the most important Australian colonial paintings ever made. Within a year the Huguenot artist Benjamin Duterrau (1767-1851) would commence work leading to his oil on canvas entitled *The Conciliation* (1840) – Australia’s first grand history painting.<sup>538</sup>

### *The Art of Conciliation*

Duterrau was sixty-five when he arrived in Van Diemen’s Land on 16 August 1832 with his daughter Sarah.<sup>539</sup> Just eight months before their arrival, the people of Hobart had witnessed the spectacle of Robinson leading the Big River Mob down the Main Road toward Government House. Duterrau had reached Van Diemen’s Land at the perfect time. With previous experience as an engraver, and a small number of his oils exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, the old artist was perfectly positioned to capitalise on the public fervor that had been raised by Robinson’s triumphant entry. This was the last group of ‘wild’ Aborigines that remained at large in the settled districts, and their ‘capture’ symbolized the end of the Black War.

*The Colonial Times* reported the triumphant entry of Robinson with the last group of Aboriginal guerilla fighters into Hobart,

On Saturday last the twenty-six Aborigines captured by Mr. Robinson, marched into town... arrayed in battle order, each male carrying three spears of twelve to fifteen feet long in the left hand, and only one in the right. As they continued advancing they shrieked their war song, and if report says true, the view with which they were induced to accompany Mr. Robinson was that they should seek redress from the Governor.<sup>540</sup>

As an agent of the Governor, Robinson had continued his approach of promising the Aborigines protection from settler attack and supplies of food and clothing if they were to give up their resistance to British invasion and accompany him to Hobart

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<sup>538</sup> Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image: Australian Painting, 1800-1880*. pp. 30-33.

<sup>539</sup> Anonymous, 'Trade and Shipping', *Hobart Town Courier*, 17 August 1832 at p 2.

<sup>540</sup> Anonymous, 'Hobart Town', *The Colonial Times*, 11 January 1832 p. 2.



Town. Robinson provided documentation of the terms of his agreement in a letter he sent ahead of his arrival in Hobart to the Colonial Secretary, John Burnett,

I have promised them an interview with the Lieutenant-Governor and told them that the Government will be sure to redress all their grievances... They have placed themselves under my protection and are desirous for peace.<sup>541</sup>

The immediate consequences for the Aborigines arriving with Robinson seriously challenged his assertion several years later that, 'in my conferences with them I have been scrupulously tenacious in keeping my word.'<sup>542</sup> Robinson is likely to have agreed in his negotiations that the Big River people would be allowed to stay on their country. He had made similar assurances in August of the previous year while on Guncarriage Island,

This morning I developed my plans to the chief MANNALARGENNA and explained to him the benevolent views of the government towards himself and people. He cordially acquiesced and expressed his entire approbation of the salutary measure, and promised his utmost aid and assistance. I informed him in the presence of KICKERTERPOLLER that I was commissioned by the Governor to inform them that, if the natives would desist from their wonten outrages upon the whites, they would be allowed to remain in their respective districts and would have flour, tea and sugar, clothes &c given them; that a good white man would dwell with them who would take care of them and would not allow any bad white man to shoot them, and he would go with them about the bush like myself and they then could hunt. He was much delighted.<sup>543</sup>

Robinson records in his next journal entry, 'the chief and the other natives went to hunt kangaroo: returned with some swans' eggs which the chief presented me with as a present from himself.' Such a gift from Manalagena would have served as a confirmation of their agreement, and a gesture of faith in their relationship. He also

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<sup>541</sup> Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &C., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania* at p 23.

<sup>542</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834 / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley*. p. 941.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.* p. 394.



secured similar agreements with the chief Eumarrah and the remaining members of the Stony Creek tribe during 1831.<sup>544</sup> In each instance, the people were removed from their country and taken to one of Robinson's offshore establishments. They were never allowed to return as promised.

The historian James Erskin Calder's view, writing forty years later, was that Robinson is likely to have deceived the Aborigines by 'making promises that he should have known could not be kept.' Calder added: 'It was never quite believed by many of the colonists that he got them all by fair persuasion; this I have heard hinted twenty times or more.'<sup>545</sup>

### *The Conciliation (1840), a Grand Ambiguity*

According to Michael Baxandall, articulating an understanding of, or interpreting a picture can be 'an untidy and lively affair' especially if, in doing so, we also seek to explain the past.<sup>546</sup> The treatment to date by Australian historians of Duterrau's little known, but highly significant painting *The Conciliation* (fig. 83) illustrates Baxandall's point well. Produced in the colony by a minor English artist following his arrival in 1832, the picture is today recognized by the Museum of Australian Democracy as one of the nation's founding documents.<sup>547</sup> Yet its meaning, at the time of its production and today, has been considered only briefly. Such national recognition might be expected to indicate that a detailed art historical analysis has been made of the picture, not simply to confirm its 'first' status, but also to explicate its meaning and significance as a key statement in the foundational narrative of the Australian nation. However, while there has been some energetic discussion of the painting's significance, with few exceptions, the investigation of its content and influences, and their interpretation has been less rigorous.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: A Radical Examination of the Tasmanian Wars*. p. 153.

<sup>545</sup> Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &C., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*. p. 23.

<sup>546</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>547</sup> Museum of Australian Democracy, 'Documenting a Democracy: Australia's Story', <<http://foundingdocs.gov.au/enlargement-eid-49-pid-66.html>>.

<sup>548</sup> Greg Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 8/2 (2015).

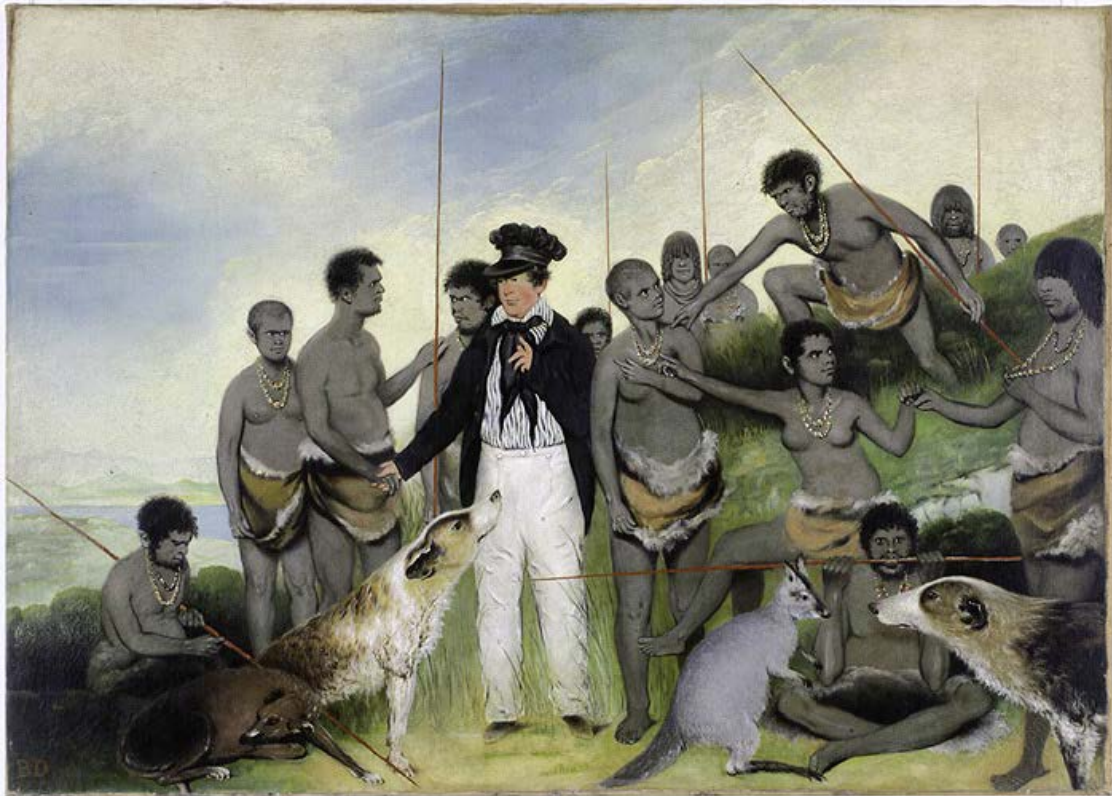


Figure 83 - Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*, 1840. Oil on canvas. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

As a result, *The Conciliation* is usually seen simply as evidence of a successful détente in the British colony with resistance fighters who had opposed attempts to displace them from their country. Such a narrative offers a sense of legitimacy to British occupation, despite the depredations suffered by Tasmanian Aborigines at the hands of both lawless colonists and roving parties. However, a closer analysis casts doubt on the assumption that Duterrau's history painting was intended to be a simple commemoration of an equitable treaty, or a celebration of 'benevolent heroism'.<sup>549</sup>

There is clear evidence that the painting was invested with literary, iconographic and allegorical references indicating a desire by the artist to represent a more complex picture of colonial triumph; one that also acknowledged the consequent loss and deception suffered by the Aborigines. In a parallel research project focusing on Duterrau's Tasmanian works, I have explored the context of the painting's production, and offered new interpretations of the content of Duterrau's picture by arguing that the artist demonstrated not only a personal relationship with his subjects,

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<sup>549</sup> Paffen, 'A Grand Illusion: Benjamin Duterrau and the Conciliation', at p 66.

but an acute understanding of the circumstances under which the agreement was offered by Robinson.<sup>550</sup>

Little has been written about Benjamin Duterrau, who is largely unknown in England where he spent the first sixty-four years of his life. Yet there is a relatively rich public record of his activities in Van Diemen's Land around the time *The Conciliation* was created. This record, mostly comprised of newspaper reports, points to a fascinating project undertaken by Duterrau upon his arrival. *The Conciliation* stands as a milestone in the history of Van Diemen's Land. It also marks a period in which Tasmanian Aborigines finally begin to appear in the work of numerous artists in the colony; effectively ending the disappearance that had characterized Van Diemen's Land's visual history up until the end of the 1820s.



Figure 84 - Benjamin Duterrau, [*The small outline of a*] *National Picture [The Conciliation]*, 1835, etching, State Library of New South Wales.

The most detailed art historical examination of the painting to date is Paul Paffen's entry in the *Melbourne Art Journal*, which provides an important survey of literature

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<sup>550</sup> Greg Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation', (University of Oxford, 2013).

on the subject.<sup>551</sup> Paffen emphasizes the process by which the artist developed a series of sketches, engravings and plaster reliefs as studies for a final product. The author underscores the importance of the range of gesture, pose and expression with which the assembled figures are depicted, in order to explore what the painting 'represents'. Significantly, Paffen considers the influence of Raphael's *Cartoons*, and *School of Athens*, versions of which were seen by Duterrau before he arrived in Hobart Town.

Duterrau provided a personal description of the subject of his painting *The Conciliation* with an entry in the Hobart Town Courier,

in commemoration of the Aborigines of this Island, and of the benefits received through their conciliation to the colony of Van Diemen's Land, by the exertions of Mr. G. A. Robinson, who is the principal figure in the picture, conversing in a friendly manner with the wild natives which induced them to quit barbarous for civilized life.<sup>552</sup>

This description refers to an engraving published in July of that year. The engraving (fig. 84) is a reversed outline of the composition seen in oil painting, and is one of a number published by Duterrau during the time he was also developing studies and portraits in drawings and oils for his grand history painting. The descriptive sheet also noted the size of the proposed painting as '11 feet by 8'.

Duterrau was the first Van Diemen's Land artist to take an explicitly academic approach to the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines. According to Christopher Allen, the artist utilized Charles Le Brun's influential theory on the passions; *Conference sur l'expression générale et particulière* (1669).<sup>553</sup> For academy painters, this was 'a necessary Ingredient of all the parts of the painting, and without it no Picture can be perfect'.<sup>554</sup> It is doubtful that any Van Diemen's Land painter in previous decades had taken such an interest. Indeed, prior to the arrival of Duterrau,

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<sup>551</sup> Paffen, 'A Grand Illusion: Benjamin Duterrau and the Conciliation'.

<sup>552</sup> Benjamin Duterrau, 'This Day Is Published', *Hobart Town Courier*, 7 August 1835 p. 1.

<sup>553</sup> Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia: From Colonisation to Postmodernism* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1997). p. 35.

<sup>554</sup> C. Harrison, P. Wood, and J. Gaiger, *Art in Theory, 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000). p. 132.

few portrait studies of Tasmanian Aborigines, other than those by naval exploration artists (see Chapter 2) and a few amateur sketches, had been created.



Figure 85 - Benjamin Duterrau, *Bas-relief Portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines*, plaster, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

What is certain is that Duterrau was the first in the colony to explicitly capitalize on Le Brun's artistic approach in the commercial promotion of his work. Eager to impress the Hobart Town public, he placed an advertisement in the *Colonial Times* promoting his production of plaster relief portraits of the Aborigines. As well as a number of named individuals, including 'Manalargorna', they were identified as 'Credulity', 'Anger', 'Surprise', 'Suspicion', 'Cheerfulness', 'Incredulity' and 'Attention'.<sup>555</sup> A set now hangs in the TMAG (fig. 85).

Various authors have attempted to link the bas-relief figures with individuals shown in the picture.<sup>556</sup> By cross-referencing these with *The Conciliation*, and Duterrau's

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<sup>555</sup> Benjamin Duterrau, 'Bas-Relief Heads', *Colonial Times*, 2 August 1836 p. 2.

<sup>556</sup> Tim Bonyhady, 'To Quit the Barbarous for a Civilised Life: Benjamin Duterrau, *the Conciliation*, 1840', in Daniel Thomas (ed.), *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988* (Adelaide: International Cultural Corporation of Australia and the Art Gallery of

sketches held in the State Library of New South Wales, it is possible to understand how the artist made use of figures from his named portraits as actors in the drama of his history painting.

In a detailed examination of *The Conciliation* (fig. 86) from left to right, we can see a man depicted using the portrait of Timmy accepting the hand of Robinson, as the central figure in the scene. At the same time, Robinson uses his left hand to gesture with oratorical authority. The two men's hands are not held in the usual grasp of a handshake, as their thumbs are not crossed. Instead of indicating firm agreement, Robinson holds Timmy's hand reassuringly, as a father might lead a child to understanding. At the same time Timmy calms the apparently incredulous man on his left, with an endorsement that Robinson should be listened to. To Robinson's right, two women seem to be also to be endorsing his offer. Duterrau's notes identify these women as being warned by their husbands not to listen.<sup>557</sup> Tanleboueyer, closest to Robinson, is checked by her angry husband Manalagena for being too credulous. The optimistic 'Truggernana',<sup>558</sup> framed by a circle of action, is the composition's other focus. Her husband Woureddy (?-1842) displays his suspicion in order to question Robinson's offer. Like Trucanini, both these men played active roles in the Aboriginal resistance, as well as attempts by Aborigines to find peace with the British.<sup>559</sup>

Duterrau is known to have met Robinson on a number of occasions and Robinson attended his studio several times, bringing Aborigines for him to sketch. The artist was, according to Bonwick, 'a devoted friend to Mr Robinson'<sup>560</sup> and considered him, 'a real hero, though not one of your world's heroes'.<sup>561</sup> The historian also notes the

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South Australia, 1988); Paul Paffen, 'Art of Memory : The Portrait in Van Diemen's Land', (University of Melbourne, 1998) at p 59; Stephen Scheduling, *The National Picture* (London: Vintage, 2002).

<sup>557</sup> Benjamin Duterrau, *The Aborigines of Tasmania: A Series of Original Etchings and Sketches of the Natives Brought in by the Conciliatory Mission under G. A. Robinson*. (Hobart Town: Benjamin Duterrau, 1835).

<sup>558</sup> Duterrau's spelling.

<sup>559</sup> Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation'.

<sup>560</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land* at p 218.

<sup>561</sup> Bonwick, *The Lost Tasmanian Race* at p 135.



artist's sympathy for the plight of the Tasmanian Aborigines, describing his first meeting with Duterrau,

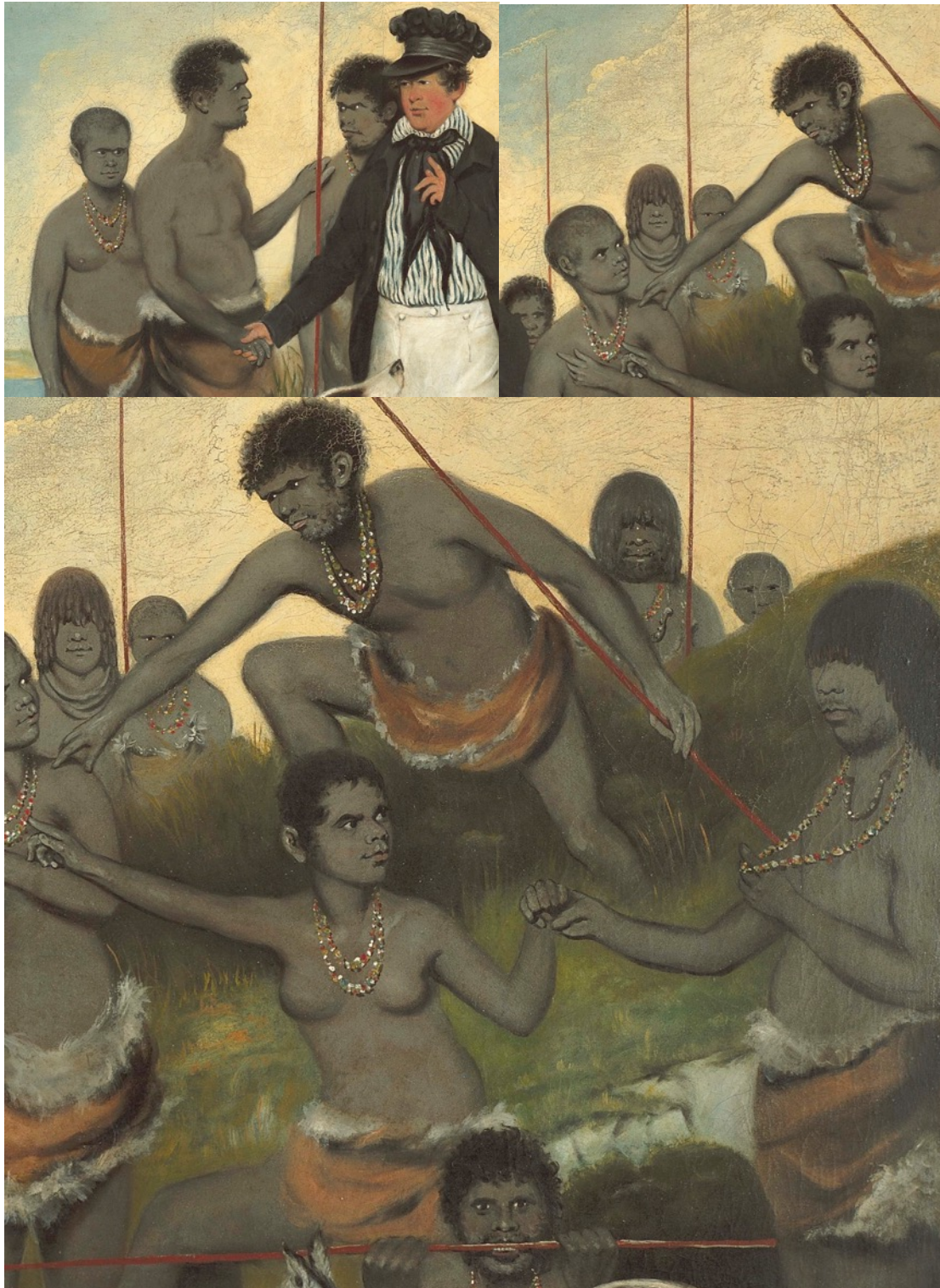


Figure 86 - Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*, 1840, (details) – Timmy and G. A. Robinson (top left); woman (Taneleboneyer) and husband (top right), woman (Trucanini) and husband (Woureddy).

Seated on that studio, I listened with rapt attention to the story of Tasmanian wrongs. The aged narrator shed tears over the fate of his black friends, and strongly excited my sympathetic impulses. “I can but set forth the story on canvas,” he said; “would that someone could tell the sad tale in a book.”<sup>562</sup>

Duterrau’s admiration for Robinson, together with his appreciation of the loss being inflicted on the Aborigines is likely to have served as an ironic source of creative tension – exactly what is required for a successful history painting. Other devices are employed by Duterrau to emphasise the drama inherent in Robinson’s moment of achievement, and to deepen the iconographic and allegorical elements of the composition. Like Diego Velazquez’ (1599-1660) *The Surrender at Breda* (see fig. 87), Duterrau’s painting includes a background of upright spears to establish the high stakes of widespread conflict that pivot on the transaction taking place between the key figures.



Figure 87 - Diego Velázquez, *La rendición de Breda* (*The Surrender of Breda*), 1634-5, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado.

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid.



Both paintings are studies in the humanity and dignity that is possible in times of war. Also, just as the uncertainty of lasting peace is hinted at by Velásquez's horse nervously raising its hind leg (poised to kick out unexpectedly), Duterrau locates a kangaroo within easy reach of a hunting dog. The dog, a common iconographic representation of trust and loyalty, watches Robinson for any clue that the uneasy peace might dissolve. Two of the three dogs are attentive to Robinson, poised for action – perhaps a suggestion that the odds of a lasting peace might not be good.<sup>563</sup> The kangaroo is corralled between the dogs, its back to Robinson, a symbol of vulnerability. Duterrau creates further tension by placing two warriors in the foreground. They are seated, intently smoothing and straightening their spears in readiness for use. The Aborigine with the spear clenched between his teeth stares out at the viewer intently, as do the armed Aborigines in the background. In this way, the threat experienced by the kangaroo is extended to the colonial audience; their prospects for peaceful settlement hang in the balance.

The Aborigines named by Duterrau in his sketchbooks are employed by the artist as actors in the drama of the meeting he depicts. They do not necessarily represent themselves in the roles that each actually played on the day of the meeting. Robinson, for example, holds the hand of an Aborigine identified by Duterrau in his sketchbook as Timmy. On the day, the agreement for peace was actually made with the chief Montpeliater. Duterrau did not have the opportunity to sketch this man, so used another to play the character of the chief. Other Aborigines known from Duterrau's studies and portraits appear multiple times in the painting, simply increasing the number of natives for dramatic effect.

The personal identity of the subjects used in the painting were not of primary importance to Duterrau. Rather, it was the dynamic of negotiation, questioning of the wisdom of the agreement, and relationships between individuals (especially husbands and wives) that the artist used to dramatize the unfolding transaction. The distinctive treatment of the woman I identify as Trucanini may represent an effort by Duterrau to trade on this woman's notoriety, in the same way as he positions her husband, the

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<sup>563</sup> For further discussion of the allegorical and iconographic significance of dogs in neo-classical art traditions, see Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation', (pp. 37-8.

well-known chief Woureddy in the mid-ground of the composition as a counterpoint to Timmy.

Importantly, Duterrau is not attempting to recreate the actual scene as it may have been described to him by Robinson. Instead, like Benjamin West with his *Death of General Wolfe*, and William Hodges' paintings of Cook's landings in the New Hebrides (c.1776) Duterrau is informed by the moment and seeks to appeal to the 'law of the historian' in order to 'capitalise on the popular appeal of exotic wonders' in order to bring a moment of great significance to life.<sup>564</sup> Like these great artists (who he would be keen to emulate), Duterrau placed these native figures according to the need for drama and allegory. Indeed, the detail of the gathering depicted by Duterrau can be confirmed as quite unlike that described by Robinson's journal account of the meeting. Robinson records, for example, that 'the men were unaccompanied by their women' at the time good relations were established.<sup>565</sup>

A clue to why the artist included women in the tableau might be found in Bonwick's account of the meeting, which curiously includes aspects of events consistent with Robinson's journals, as well as Duterrau's dramatized reconstruction. As we know that Bonwick and Duterrau had discussed the painting and the events it depicted, Bonwick's account may possibly offer a glimpse into Duterrau's creative process. Bonwick wrote,

Meanwhile, some of the courageous female guides had glided around, and were holding quiet, earnest converse with their wilder sisters. Another few minutes of irresolution, and then Montpeliata walked slowly to the rear to confer with the old women – the real arbiters of war. The men pointed their spears in watchful guard; but the yelping curs were called off. With admirable discipline, the brutes retired and were instantly quiet.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*. p. 80.

<sup>565</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834 / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley*. p. 571.

<sup>566</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 225-26.

*The Conciliation* shows Aboriginal women as a foil to the implied aggression of the men. They are ‘arbiters’ and demonstrate this role at a number of locations in the picture. A woman stands behind Montpeliata (represented by Timmy) as he receives Robinson’s hand. To Robinson’s left, two women gesture toward the agreement, meeting the eyes of their husbands as they urge them to join in the spirit of the peaceful transaction. It is in this moment that Duterrau deploys the emotional characterisations of ‘Credulity’, ‘Suspicion’, ‘Incredulity’ and ‘Attention’ rehearsed in his earlier bas-reliefs. While Robinson and Timmy are the active agents in the agreement being depicted, it is the two women Tanleboneyer and Trucanini<sup>567</sup> who share a large part of the central focus of the composition. Trucanini, with arms outstretched, presents a countervailing symbol of conciliation alongside Robinson’s hand-clasp. Curiously, she alone among the women is depicted with an unshaved head, presumably to draw attention to this key role by emphasising her femininity in a way that would appeal to European viewers.



Figure 88 - Jacques-Louis David, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women*, 1799, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre.

<sup>567</sup> These two women are represented by named drawings in Duterrau’s sketchbook, held by the State Library of New South Wales. His notes place the women with their husbands standing in the background. However, they also serve as models for the women positioned in the foreground.

The symbol of woman as conciliator is powerfully manifested in one the most famous works of the French Revolution – a work that Duterrau (a Huguenot Englishman) is certain to have been familiar with. First suggested by Julie Gough, Duterrau's positioning of Trucanini with arms outstretched can be seen as a motif similar to that at the centre of Jacques-Louis David's *The Sabine Women* (1799), a scene from the iconic tale told by Livy and Plutarch. Gough observes that *The Conciliation* 'structurally bears a resemblance' to David's painting (see fig. 88), and 'signifies Trucanini's central role in Robinson's mission.'<sup>568</sup> Gough is referring to visual similarities between Duterrau's Trucanini, and David's depiction of the heroic Hersilia, leader of the Sabine women. The French painter shows Hersilia interceding between her husband Romulus, and her brother Tatius. She pleads for peace in the midst of conflict that envelops the scene.

The French master uses this tale to express his disdain for the mounting internecine bloodshed of the Revolution. Duterrau has placed Trucanini in a similar role; imploring her husband Wourredy to acknowledge the treaty being offered by Robinson to Timmy as a means to peace.<sup>569</sup>

Like his sculptural studies, Duterrau used his drawings and engravings to develop the ultimate composition of the oil painting. During this process, several elements were modified from earlier iterations. Women are added to the background. The dogs are brought forward in the scene, and the fire is removed from the foreground to be replaced by the kangaroo. All of these changes intensify the drama and enrich the narrative. However, the most powerful change is one that has been missed by previous commentators on *The Conciliation*. The man (Woureddy) to Robinson's far left, who is gestured to by his wife (Trucanini) is shown in the earlier engraving holding forward his spear. This served as a straightforward pointer to the terms of the transaction being carried out between Robinson and the leader of the Big River Mob. Trucanini gestures to Robinson's offer of peace, while her husband counters with a suggestion that the agreement will deny them the capacity for further defense.

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<sup>568</sup> Julie Gough, 'Benjamin Duterrau', in Frances Lindsay (ed.), *The Joseph Brown Collection* (National Gallery of Victoria, 2004).

<sup>569</sup> Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation'. p. 25.

However, in the painting, the spear is gone. Instead, Woureddy holds out a brightly coloured shell necklace that hangs around his neck.

As well as Woureddy, each of the women wears similar shell necklaces. In fact, all Aboriginal figures in the painting wear either a shell necklace, a jawbone amulet, or a plain strip of kangaroo skin around their necks – all that is, except Montpeliater (Timmy), who accepts Robinson's hand in a commitment to peace. As pointed to in my previous study,<sup>570</sup> the shell necklace is an important ceremonial object and a unique identifier of Aboriginal identity and place in Tasmania. The appearance of necklaces in the oil painting is a key element in the narrative of historical drama that Duterrau sought to enhance with this new material. Based on my understanding of the continuing cultural significance of the shell necklace in Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, I argue that Duterrau was using the necklace as a symbol of the cultural cost of the agreement with Robinson. Gough refers to the rainbow-coloured maireener shells used in the manufacture of these necklaces, 'as a way of transmitting the powerful aura these cultural objects hold'.<sup>571</sup> She goes further,

Our ancestors, including those directly affected by Robinson's dispossessions and relocations from their traditional lands, did not stop making during the hardest times. It is in the spirit of acknowledging their determination that the transmission of the knowledge and skills of shell necklace making continues. By their making, Tasmanian Aborigine people made a future.<sup>572</sup>

Trucanini therefore stands between the prospect of peace and a threat to the continuity of culture, connection to land and perhaps even Aboriginal identity itself. If this interpretation is valid, then Duterrau was offering his painting to the public with a sophisticated analysis of the likely cost to Aborigines of the deal that Robinson was offering. Primarily, the painting was a direct acknowledgement of the importance to the colonists of the end of the Black War, symbolized as it was by the surrender of the Big River Mob. However, it was also an energetic and multilayered history painting,

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<sup>570</sup> Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation', ( p. 18.

<sup>571</sup> Lehman, 'Being Here: Authenticity and Presence in Tasmanian Aboriginal Art'. p. 37.

<sup>572</sup> Julie Gough, 'Honouring the Past/Making a Future', in Lola Greeno and Julie Gough (eds.), *Lola Greeno: Cultural Jewels* (Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft; Surrey Hills, NSW: Object: Australian Design Centre, 2014). p. 108.

invested with allegorical depth and dramatic tension meant to evidence its worth as an academic work, thereby promoting the artist as a painter of stature in the colony. Most importantly, the painting must be considered as more than a simple celebration of the heroic character of Robinson.

Certainly, this man had acted on behalf of Governor Arthur to popular acclaim for exterminating the Aborigines from the island and bring an end to the Black War. But Duterrau also poses questions in *The Conciliation* – about the cost of this outcome for Aboriginal people and the morality of Robinson's deal.



Figure 89 - Benjamin Duterrau, *Woureddy*, 1834, oil on canvas, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (left); Benjamin Duterrau, *Portrait of Truganini, daughter of the Chief of Bruny Island, Van Diemen's Land*, National Library of Australia (right).

It is a matter of record that within days of the treaty being struck, the Governor had dismissed the Aborigines' requests by removing them to permanent detention. Robinson had offered false hope. Timmy and his people had lost their island home. The gaze of so many figures in the scene toward the viewer denied the colonial public a passive role in the drama. They were required to meet the accusing eyes of the Aborigines and recognize themselves as part of the

painting's epic tragedy. Indeed, contemporary viewers of Duterrau's painting were the prime beneficiaries of the deception.<sup>573</sup>

Duterrau began working in late 1832 on his series of drawings, engravings, portraits in oil (fig. 89) and bas-relief that would culminate in *The Conciliation*, which he dated 1840.<sup>574</sup> During this time, Robinson's status had diminished. Resentment had grown among colonists as the extent of the generous payments, land grants and annuities he had received from the governor became more widely known.<sup>575</sup> Once the hysteria over the threat Aborigines posed to settlers had subsided, editorials and letters began to appear in colonial newspapers questioning both the wisdom and justice of the governor's treatment of Aborigines, and of Robinson's role.

Further, by 1838 colonists were becoming aware of the great number of Aborigines who had died in detention at Robinson's Wybalenna mission on Flinders Island, and their conscience was raw. Is it possible that by the time he had completed his oil painting, the sympathy Duterrau felt for the Aborigines, so clearly documented by Bonwick, had overwhelmed his appreciation of the heroism of Robinson? Had Robinson fallen from grace in Duterrau's imagination, just as he had in the eyes of the colony?<sup>576</sup>

As Duterrau's grand composition evolved, so did its ambiguity. Perhaps in Duterrau's enthusiasm to impress the art patrons of Hobart Town, he had exceeded their taste. If it is true that Robinson's diminishing reputation affected Duterrau's regard for his hero, it may also be the case that public interest in Duterrau, who had staked his reputation on a grand project centred on Robinson's achievements, suffered also. By the time of his death, Duterrau had achieved only limited success as an artist. A significant proportion of his works, including *The Conciliation* and the larger version of *The National Picture* remained unsold at his death.

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<sup>573</sup> Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation'.

<sup>574</sup> A larger version of *The Conciliation*, referred to by Duterrau as *The National Picture*, is known to have existed. This may represent a further development of the history painting. However, its whereabouts, and therefore its composition, is unknown. See Scheduling, *The National Picture*.

<sup>575</sup> Greg Lehman, 'The Devil We Know', in Damian Quillien (ed.), *Robinson's Cup* (Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 2011).

<sup>576</sup> Lehman, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation'.



The necklace that is absent from Timmy's neck is replaced with nothing but Robinson's handshake and the broken promise it symbolises. This scene may have been too close to the uncomfortable truth of a grand deception for the public to want to be reminded of it. Duterrau's deeply ambiguous history painting seems to be as unresolvable as the morality surrounding the deception and dispossession of the Tasmanian Aborigines by Robinson. It may be no coincidence that Duterrau's corpus of work, and Robinson's legacy, both continue to be the subject of controversy and misunderstanding.

### *The End of Absence*

What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, l. 22-26.

Sentiment toward Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land had shifted dramatically in the five years following the end of the Black War. Cessation of attacks on settlers is likely to have provided an opportunity for the public to reflect on the events of the preceding decade of war and terror.<sup>577</sup> The spectacle of Robinson's entry into Hobart in 1832 had impressed upon the colonists who had lined the streets that the feared warriors were now reduced to a small number, and settlers were able to feel secure in the knowledge what the 'wild natives' had now been exiled to Flinders Island with no hope of return. Clements suggests that 'virtually overnight, newspapers and private correspondents all but ceased discussing the Blacks.'<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Sporadic attacks were still occurring in the north west of the island up until 1842. See Ian Mcfarlane, *Beyond Awakening, the Aboriginal Tribes of North West Tasmania: A History* (Launceston: Fullers Bookshop, 2008).

<sup>578</sup> Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*. p. 169.



However, while attacks on settlers had mostly ceased, and the cause of outrage and revulsion against Aborigines had passed, a curious interest began to prevail as the European population of the island realized that they had vanquished a people who they knew very little about. Even during the most intense period of conflict, there had existed a sympathetic attitude to Aborigines. Historian John West wrote,

In the interior the blacks were spoken of with intense fear, and detestation: in the capital, even their depredations were questioned, and the subjects of conversation, were rather their sufferings than their crimes.<sup>579</sup>

However, in the north of the island, attitudes were more hardened. James Fenton recalled a conversation with a settler,

It's a pity that every one of the black wretches was allowed to escape without being roasted alive which was too good for them. And now, there they are, the biggest villains of every tribe who were clever enough to escape summary vengeance – there they are pampered up in Flinders Island with food and clothing, and Robinson and Parson Dove to pray for them.<sup>580</sup>

In Hobart, however, those who had been most closely involved in the administration and management of operations against Aborigines were more closely concerned with notions of justice. Gilbert Robertson, even though he had led roving parties and contributed to the operation of the Black Line, became an ardent critic of Governor Arthur through his editorship of *The Colonist* newspaper. He told Arthur in 1827,

They consider every injury they can inflict upon white men as an act of duty and patriotic, and however they may dread the punishment which our laws inflict on them, they consider the sufferers of these punishments as martyrs of their country... having ideas of their natural rights which would astonish most of our European statesmen.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>580</sup> Paul Fenton (ed.), *James Fenton of Forth: A Tasmanian Pioneer 1820-1901* (Melbourne: Educare, 2001). p. 205.

<sup>581</sup> Cited in Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 112.

Three years later, the editor of the *Colonial Advocate* expressed similar sympathies,

The reflection that so much blood is daily spilled on both sides, must surely be very dreadful to a feeling heart... it is said privately that up the country, instances occur where the Natives 'are shot like so many crows', which never becomes public.<sup>582</sup>

As early as 1821, Chief Justice Pedder, a member of the Executive Council of Van Diemen's Land had expressed his concern that the planned exile of the Aborigines would cause them a 'hopeless imprisonment', and would lead to their demise. Governor Arthur's response was to pragmatically anticipate this as a death sentence,

Even if they should pine away in the manner the Chief Justice apprehends, it is better that they should meet with their death in that way, whilst every act of kindness is manifested towards them; than they should fall sacrifice to the inevitable consequences of their continued acts of outrage upon the white inhabitants.<sup>583</sup>

Yet even the Governor was haunted by the injustice of the situation, 'I cannot divest myself of the consideration that all aggression originated with the white inhabitants, and therefore much ought be endured in return.'<sup>584</sup> The survivors of the Black War, who he had sentenced to a life of detention on Flinders Island away from the public eye, remained a living testament to the storm of brutality that had been unleashed on them by the colony. After a few years, as news began to filter back to Hobart from the Aboriginal Establishment, public opinion began to change. In 1837 Robinson wrote,

there is not an aborigine on the settlement nor an aborigine that has been at the settlement but what bears marks of violence perpetrated upon them by the depraved whites.

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>583</sup> Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*. p. 312-3.

<sup>584</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 101.

He goes on to add, ‘many of the inhabitants now laud the Aborigines for their good deeds as much as they before feared and hated them for their bad deeds.’<sup>585</sup> This process commenced from the entry of the Big River Mob into Hobart and grew at the same time as artistic production by Duterrau had begun to appear. The citizens of Hobart were now able to collect and own engraved and sculpted figures that brought to life the story of Robinson’s mission and how their own safety had been secured. Like the photographic *cartes de visite* that were soon to take Hobart by storm (see Chapter 5), Duterrau’s small engravings could be enjoyed by collectors at their leisure as a subject for personal entertainment.



Figure 90 - Benjamin Duterrau, *Manalargernar*; *Tanleboueyer*; *A Wild Native Taking a Kangaroo* (clockwise from top), engravings, State Library of New South Wales.

<sup>585</sup> Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*.

Duterrau's small, affordable engravings (fig.90) offered what Steve Edwards refers to as a 'perverse democracy,'<sup>586</sup> allowing an illusory acknowledgement by settlers of the Aborigines who were now banished from the lives. These images were now valued and given presence in the domestic space of the colonists' lives, 'the commodity carte fragmented and dismembered the portrait. It translated people into signs and established patterns of equivalence among them.'<sup>587</sup> The cheap and portable nature of Duterrau's engravings re-created images of Aborigines as an affordable commodity, enabling middle class purchasers to participate in the realization of peace; and energizing their role as authors of the social circumstances of the colony itself. The owner of an engraving could now experience a tangible and intimate share of power – over not only the Aborigines who were depicted, but the entire period of war and insecurity for which the engravings provided an indexical representation. The presence of Robinson in the tableau guaranteed that the index was a reassuring one, evincing the coming of peace and the triumph of colonial power and Christian authority, while allowing an opportunity for sober, redemptive contemplation of the 'severe necessity' that had been required to achieve Aboriginal removal.

Colonists who had lived a decade or more with the threat of Aborigines murdering settlers, burning down farms and spearing livestock, now had the opportunity to possess or gift such an object, and to arrange it within the safety of their cabinet or album as a welcome indulgence. The assertion of sovereignty over Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their country that had been presaged by Frankland's Proclamation Boards, and hard won with immense cost and loss of life during the Black War, could finally be held in the hands of every colonist – a tangible reassurance of the just cause of the extreme measures that has been taken in Van Diemen's Land, and an expression of quiet, uneasy regret at the unsettling cost this had imposed on their 'sable acquaintances'.

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<sup>586</sup> Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). p. 81.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

### *Aborigines as Arcadians*

Benjamin Duterrau was not the only artist to respond to the changed circumstances of artistic reception in Van Diemen's Land at the end of the Black War. John Glover (1767-1849) had arrived in Van Diemen's Land two years before Duterrau. Glover had enjoyed moderate success in London and Paris, attracting the praise of both Louise XVIII and Napoleon. He prospered with a healthy income from his drawings and lessons, and purchased an estate at Patterdale in Cumbria, once owned by Wordsworth. His engagement with art was profound – selling Patterdale after only two years in order to buy a Claude and returning to London.

Glover departed for Van Diemen's Land with considerable wealth, which may have been a significant factor in his decision to emigrate, as he was exposed to significant taxation liabilities.<sup>588</sup> The artist's son William had met with G. W. Evans in London in 1827, exchanging a number of drawings for eighty acres of land.<sup>589</sup> Evans may have shared with Glover some of his own sketches of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and John Glover may have also seen Lycett's *Views of Australia*; probably influencing his decision to leave England by giving him a visual taste of prospects in the colony with its picturesque scenes of a pastoral idyll. By this time, he is also likely to have seen the noble, classicized depictions of Tasmanian Aborigines by Webber and Piron, further adding to the welcoming appeal of the colony for a potential emigrant.

Glover arrived at the Tamar River in Van Diemen's Land on his sixty-fourth birthday, making several drawings around Launceston before continuing south and eventually disembarking in Hobart on April 1, 1831. The artist's two sons had already taken up land north of Hobart, and John Glover soon purchased two farms nearby at Tea Tree Bush; to be managed by an indentured immigrant he had sponsored from England. Meanwhile, Glover and his wife established a base in Hobart where he was able to secure business, social and artistic relationships. Over the next five months, he

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<sup>588</sup> According to John Olsen, his wealth at this time exceeded sixty thousand pounds. John Olsen, 'John Glover', *Art and Australia*, 3/2 (1965).

<sup>589</sup> Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover'.

completed around three hundred sketches and commenced a number of oil paintings.<sup>590</sup> One of these featured his first representations of Tasmanian Aborigines.



Figure 91 - John Glover, *A View between the Swan River and King Georges Sound*, 1833, oil on canvas, Wesfarmers Collection, Perth.

Misleadingly titled *A View between the Swan River and King Georges Sound* (Fig. 91), Glover's earliest oil painting following his departure from England is easily dismissed as a scene from the colony in West Australia. However, Timms and Hansen point out a common confusion in early generalized references to the Australian colonies, frequently mentioned by free settlers as 'the Swan River District'.<sup>591</sup> This was probably a way of differentiating an otherwise unpleasant association with the penal colonies of NSW and Van Diemen's Land. Glover certainly did not visit West Australia and is likely to have created this scene as a composite, drawing on his painting experience elsewhere, and his views of the east coast of Van Diemen's Land as he sailed between Launceston and Hobart.

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>591</sup> Peter Timms and David Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Art Exhibitions Australia Limited, 2003). p. 197.

According to Timms and Hansen, the Aboriginal figures in the foreground, 'are more like the idealised groups to be found in the works of early colonial painters such as Joseph Lycett, John Lewin and Thomas Watling.'<sup>592</sup> However, Glover had already experienced a personal encounter with Tasmanian Aborigines while sailing up the Tamar River on his initial arrival on the island. In a letter to his sister, written in September 1833, he recalls how,

On passing the 'Supply Mills', our boats were despatched for a supply of water: and in the interim our gun party went on shore, and met with a party of native, one of whom was shot at and knocked over, but they all finally escaped, as did also our own party, no less thankfully.<sup>593</sup>

Ian McLean acknowledges this encounter,<sup>594</sup> but does not draw a connection between the event and the figures in *Swan River*. Perhaps the connection is tenuous, and there is a lack of corresponding material in any of Glover's sketch books to point to this as a source. Also, none of the artist's completed works from his initial visit to Launceston include any Aborigines. However, it is significant to note that the Supply Mill encounter is Glover's first known exposure to Tasmanian Aborigines, and predates *Swan River* by only a few months. Glover's depiction of the Aborigines in this painting is ethnographically correct, with the standing men holding long spears characteristic of Tasmania. It is therefore reasonable to consider that Glover may have used the encounter to inform the composition of this important painting.

Another opportunity for Glover to consider placing Aborigines in one of his early Van Diemen's Land paintings may have come about when he travelled north to inspect his land grant at Mill's Plains. In late August, 1831, the artist was shown a family of three Aborigines; Timbarina (mother), Lunamena (child) and Montena (father) being held in the gaol at Campbell Town. These, he sketched and named (fig.92 left). Another Aboriginal figure appears on an adjacent page, with characteristic dreadlocks, but unusually wearing shirt and trousers. This man is un-named by Glover; a matter inviting further research.

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Cited in Mcphee, *The Art of John Glover*. p. 55.

<sup>594</sup> Mclean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape'.



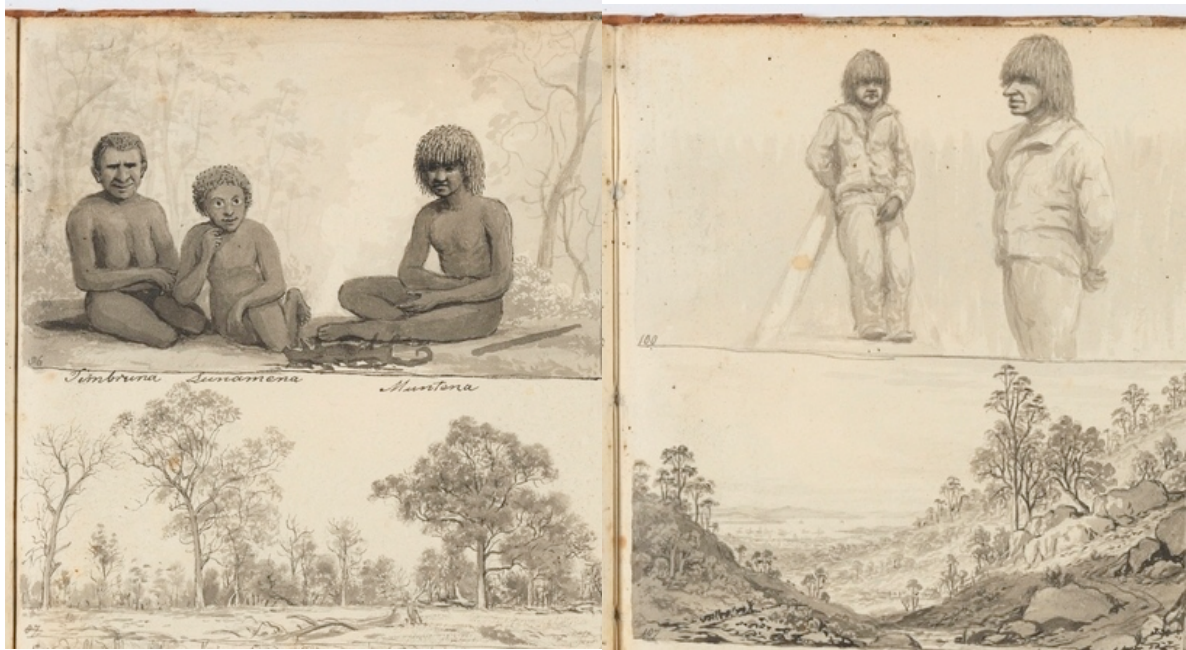


Figure 92 - John Glover, *Untitled, Sketchbook No. 43*, 1831-32, drawings, (details), State Library of New South Wales.

It is also notable that in these earliest sketches by the artist of Aboriginal subjects, they appear more European in their features, differing considerably from those drawn on further occasions. Glover seemed to be adjusting his eye and hand to these new people.

It was while Glover was in Launceston that he would have first met George Augustus Robinson, who was in town for a period after travelling in the north east of the island in search of the chief Eumarrah, and arranging a meeting between Governor Arthur and the chief Manalagena.<sup>595</sup> As well as providing the opportunity for Glover to learn first hand about the Black War, Robinson's Mission and the treatment of Aborigines at the hands of settlers, Glover was also able to draw the Aboriginal people travelling with Robinson. In the sketchbook, he names Oredia (Woureddy), Umarah (Eumarrah), Telliabuya, Kikadapaula, and Ludawiddia. The chief Manalagura (Manalagena) is sketched in three different views (fig. 93 lower).

<sup>595</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 192.



During two visits to Launceston, he also sketched more imprisoned Aborigines; including Colammanea, Maccame and Wawwee (fig. 93 upper) who had been accused of murdering Capt. Thomas and Mr Parker.<sup>596</sup> These figures are all depicted as markedly unhappy; not surprising given that they would now face British retribution for the deaths of settlers. However, they do not seem to differ in their countenance to Robinson's 'friendly natives'. Perhaps the uniform, downturned mouths and searching gazes indicate Glover's growing awareness of the extreme circumstances of human tragedy that he was bearing witness to.

If Glover was indeed pondering the unhappiness of the Aborigines at this time, his letter to Emma Lord dated August 26, 1831 politely skirts this. Glover describes his meeting with the family of three at Campbell Town,

I have lately seen three of the natives, a man, woman and child – and have drawn their pictures. They were much pleased to see their pictures and seemed to become quite attached to me, they are ugly, particularly the woman, but their language is beautiful... They have lately been caught and were in Campbell Town Jail. They were to have gone out opossum hunting with me, but when I returned, two of them were gone with a constable to entice others to come in. There are very few remaining now.<sup>597</sup>

We can understand from this why the small family group might seem cheerful when compared to the others that he later drew. They were probably hopeful of making an escape while out hunting with Glover. Indeed, Montena did later escape. However, there was little prospect of this for the Aboriginal people sketched on his visits to the Launceston jail over the next few weeks. Their lives were now in jeopardy. However, it is curious that the artist depicted Robinson's group of Aborigines in a similar light. This might serve as a window into a lack of enthusiasm by the people accompanying Robinson to be involved in the next leg of his mission, which was to bring in the Big River Mob. They had been on several expeditions now, and the Aborigines would

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<sup>596</sup> Robinson, *Friendly Mission : The Tasmanian Journals and Papers, 1829-1834* / Edited by N. J. B. Plomley. p. 429. See also notes in Timms and Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*. p. 289.

<sup>597</sup> Cited by Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover'. p. 102.

have been aware of what was about to happen to the last resistance fighters in the region.



Figure 93 - John Glover, *Untitled*, *Sketchbook No. 43*, 1831-32, drawings, State Library of New South Wales.

A number of these same individuals are named again in Glover's sketchbook in late December of that year, when he meets Robinson who is bringing the Big River Mob into Hobart. On the first page of Glover's *Sketchbook No. 98* are two drawings (fig. 94). The first is a group of ten Tasmanian Aborigines. The only named individual is, significantly, the chief Montapeliado (Montpeliata), with whom Robinson had to negotiate their agreement with the Governor. Another group of eight drawn below is less formal and includes several individuals in smiling and animated poses. By comparing these with the group portrait from Sketchbook No. 43 (fig. 93 lower), it is possible to identify Eumarrah and Manalagena in the assemblage.

The mood of the drawing is lighter and more cheerful than the earlier Launceston sketches. Several figures are reclining or sleeping. Ominously, the note at the bottom of the page points to their imminent exile to Flinders Island (also known as Great Island), exposing whatever optimism might have been created by Robinson's

assurances as misplaced. The figure of Manalagena draped against a tree branch appears pensive (fig. 94), as if he has already weighed the risks and realized that the likelihood of success for them is small. Montpeliater, who had maintained resistance longer than any of the other great chiefs and is risking most of all in the scene, stares directly at Manalagena who, by endorsing Robinson's treaty, must carry ultimate responsibility.

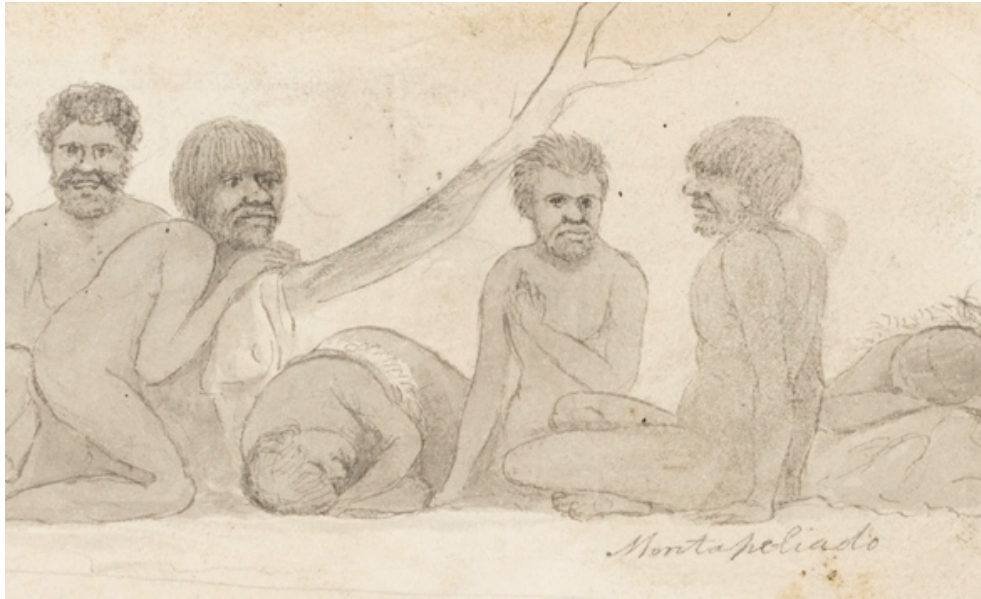


Figure 94 - John Glover, *The Natives that were sent from Hobart Town to Great Island*, Sketchbook No. 98, 1832, drawing, (detail), State Library of New South Wales.

## *Exile*

John Glover is best known for his landscapes, done in a picturesque development of a topographic style embracing that of Claude Lorraine (1600-1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673). Glover depicted a strange, but appealing land that seemed to unfold with unbroken splendour from his new home at Patterdale in the north of the island, across the grasslands and woodlands of the Midlands, to the shores of the Derwent and the foothills of Mount Wellington. His most celebrated painting is probably *Mount Wellington and Hobart from Kangaroo Point* (fig. 95). The thriving industry of Hobart Town, its port bustling with ships, and its houses reaching upwards into the valleys and foothills of Mt. Wellington, is bathed in the morning light signalling a prosperous future. In the foreground is juxtaposed a group of Tasmanian Aborigines caught in the act of wild celebration, as they dance and luxuriate around the campfire,

enjoying the spoils of the hunt and swimming joyfully in the waters of the Derwent River. It is a bizarre scene, as there is surely nothing to celebrate. The growth of Hobart in the distance has only been possible through the destruction of their culture and kin. The scene, painted in 1835, is a fantasy. The only place where Tasmanian Aborigines could gather in such numbers now was on Flinders Island. And there was little cause for celebration there.



Figure 95 - John Glover, *Mount Wellington and Hobart from Kangaroo Point*, 1835, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia & Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

When Glover sketched the people he met who were being brought into Hobart by Robinson they numbered only twenty-six, representing a loss of as many as 90% of the Aboriginal population that existed in the central and southeast of Tasmania before of European arrival.<sup>598</sup> As many analysts have concluded, their extirpation and removal from the island constituted a genocide, or should at least be critically considered as such.<sup>599</sup> Yet, the festivity in Glover's painting seems to suggest that this

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<sup>598</sup> Richard Cosgrove, 'Raw Material Movement and Past Tasmanian Aboriginal Interaction: Implications for Understanding Isolated Human Population Dynamics', *Archaeology in Oceania*, 50 (2015).

<sup>599</sup> See Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*; Curthoys, 'Raphaël Lemkin's Tasmania: An Introduction'; Lawson, *The Last Man: A British Genocide in Tasmania*; Lehman, 'Tasmanian Gothic: The Art of Australia's Forgotten War'; Benjamin Madley, 'From Terror to Genocide: Britain's Tasmanian Penal Colony and Australia's History Wars', *Journal of British Studies*, 47/1 (2008); Dirk Moses, 'Coming to Terms with Genocidal Pasts in Comparative Perspective: Germany and Australia', *Aboriginal History*, 25 (2001); Rebe Taylor, 'Genocide, Extinction and Aboriginal Self-Determination in Tasmanian



process never occurred. The Aborigines are pictured as ignorant of their own fate. The only hint at historical truth can be seen in the shadow that, in picturesque fashion, casts a pall over their celebration, consigning it to an Arcadian past that was not expected to survive the superiority of Britain's imperial purpose and power.

Glover was the first significant landscape painter in colonial Van Diemen's Land to depict Aborigines in a landscape that had been their home for a thousand generations. That this only occurred after the systematic killing and final expatriation of those who had survived the Black War of resistance to British invasion is the greatest of ironies. He completed at least twelve paintings that included Aborigines, with ten of these dated between 1832 and 1837. Most of these featured corroborees, which Glover used to convey his theme of happy natives, living an unspoiled life, 'One seldom sees such gaiety in a Ballroom as amongst these untaught savages.'<sup>600</sup>



Figure 96 - John Glover, Constitution Hill at Sun Set Van Diemen's Land from near Mrs Ransom's Publick House, 1840, oil on canvas, State Library of Victoria.

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Historiography', *History Compass*, 11/6 (2013); Breen, 'Extermination, Extinction, Genocide: British Colonialism and Tasmanian Aborigines'.

<sup>600</sup> Timms and Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*. p. 241.

This series was brought to a close in 1840 with *Constitution Hill at Sun Set, Van Diemen's Land from near Mrs Ransom's Public House* (fig.96). In this composition, Glover returns to the picturesque formula seen in his first painting with Aborigines. Instead of a distant seascape, the hills provide a backdrop framed by trees, with a lone Aboriginal figure gathering wood in the centre foreground for a campfire around which a small group of natives stand and sit. Again, the figures are in shadow – a device Glover uses often in his landscapes with Aborigines, but does not do with the settlers, who he always depicts in his Tasmanian views as bathed in sunlight (see for example fig. 97).



Figure 97 - John Glover, *Launceston and the River Tamar*, 1832, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Another example of this strategy can be seen in Glover's inclusion of rainbows. There are three works featuring rainbows in Hansen's definitive catalogue.<sup>601</sup> One, an early watercolour from 1795, is simply an indication, says Hansen, of the artist's early experimentation with effects of weather and light. Two later works, however, are clearly symbolic. McPhee refers to the rainbows in *Patterdale Landscape with Rainbow* (c. 1835), and *Mount Wellington with Orphan Asylum* (1837) as biblical

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<sup>601</sup> Hansen, 'Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings'.



references to God's Covenant with Noah. In the first painting, this symbol describes the artist's new home as a 'blessed haven'.<sup>602</sup> In the second (fig. 98), Glover has exaggerated the vertical scale of the Wellington Range, emphasising the grandeur of the scene. The painting's sublime character also points to the destructive power of the Biblical Deluge and the recurring theme of cataclysm, renewal and freedom from an unknowable, or unsettling past. In Van Diemen's Land, the past had been haunted by the fear and terror of the Black War – during which women and children on both sides were killed without mercy. The Orphan's Asylum demonstrates God's protection of the children harboured in an institution that reassured colonists of a future of civic order and benefaction.



Figure 98 - John Glover, *Mount Wellington with Orphan's Asylum, Van Diemen's Land*, 1837, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria.

Neither McPhee, nor Hansen note that the rainbow, as an allegorical promise of better days ahead, is never employed in association with Aborigines.<sup>603</sup> Instead, unlike his

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<sup>602</sup> John McPhee, 'The Symbolic Landscape', *ibid.* p. 118.

<sup>603</sup> Julie Gough notes that the Orphan's Asylum also served as a repository for Aboriginal children separated from their parents by violence or incarceration (*pers. comm.*), although it is unknown whether this was also in Glover's mind.



illustration of scenes with colonists, Glover's paintings with Aborigines are consistently illuminated by low-angled, or fading light, sunset, or even moonlight. Ian McLean describes this approach as 'pictorial apartheid', arguing that Glover 'deliberately employed aesthetic and narrative strategies for moral and ideological effects',<sup>604</sup> wherein he maintains a clear distinction between landscapes that are concerned with the world of Aboriginal people, and pastoral ones in which Aborigines are absent, and settlers prevail. Like the topographical painters of Sydney, Glover placed Aborigines in a foreground beyond which the viewer can gaze from an uncivilised past, to an abundant imperial future.

Glover completed two more paintings in 1840-41. In each of these, the artist returns to European subject matter, with *Swilker Oak* (1840) based on a sketch he had made in the Needwood Forest of Staffordshire in the 1790s, and an *Italian Landscape* (1841) reprising his Claudian interests.<sup>605</sup> After this nostalgic flourish, no other painting is known to have been completed for a period of five years, during which the artist lived in 'complete retirement with his family... deriving pleasure and comfort from reading, which was confined almost exclusively to religious books.'<sup>606</sup>

In February 1845, Glover was visited by John Skinner Prout (1805-1876), who had just completed a sketching tour to Lake St Clair. Prout was planning to visit the Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island and no doubt mentioned this to Glover, who was, of course, well-known for his interest in picturing them. Such a conversation must have rekindled his interest, not only in painting, but also in the subject of Aborigines. John Glover's last known painting (fig. 99), a watercolour, is inscribed 'Correbery (sic) of Natives in Van Diemen's Land by John Glover partly done on his 79<sup>th</sup> Birth day February 18, 1846'.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Mclean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape'. p. 126.

<sup>605</sup> Timms and Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*. p. 240-41.

<sup>606</sup> Cited in Hansen, 'The Life and Work of John Glover'. p. 106.

<sup>607</sup> Timms and Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*. p. 241.



Figure 99 - John Glover, *Correbery (sic) of Natives in Van Diemen's Land*, 1846, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

This painting is almost identical to an oil Glover sent to King Louis VIII in 1840, which now hangs in Musée du Louvre, but the last watercolour is much darker. In this picture, Tasmanian Aborigines dance *en masse* around a blazing fire. The moon is high in the sky and the scene of 'gaiety' all but disappears in the enveloping night. In the twilight of his own life, Glover had bid his Aboriginal Arcadians a similar *adieu*.

John Glover's unique work reinscribed Tasmanian Aborigines into a landscape from which they had been almost completely erased by topographical artists over the preceding thirty years. This marked out the visual history of Van Diemen's Land as completely unlike that of its parent colony of New South Wales. The virtual removal of Aborigines was undertaken for a range of reasons – all associated with the need to manage the conflict that commenced within the first months of British invasion, and importantly, with promoting the colony's economic development. When Governor Arthur authorised military action to physically exterminate Aborigines from the island, this trope of virtual absence was translated into a physical cleansing. Tasmanian Aborigines had been an intolerably threatening presence in a landscape destined for a future in which its original inhabitants had no place.

The conclusion of this process was celebrated with the production of a range of works by Duterrau. These culminated not only in a major history painting, but also in generating a range of cheap, accessible engravings and plaster reliefs with which the colony could participate in the triumph of empire over hard savagery and a deadly resistance by the Tasmania's original owners. At the same time, Glover's re-inscription of Aborigines into the landscape allowed, for the first time, an acknowledgement of the natives as a parenthetical presence – not in the colony's present – but clearly consigned to its past. At a time when mid-nineteenth-century Europe was being torn by revolution, Glover and Duterrau provided Van Diemen's Land with a bright and optimistic vision of its future, and in which Aborigines obtained a new position – as *le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent*.<sup>608</sup> Like Manet's depictions of gypsies, beggars, singers and workers, Glover might be seen as offering Aborigines as an early moment of modernism after the confusion and violence of the Black War. However, this moment was an illusion; one which colonists would willingly celebrate for decades to come.

The year after Glover completed his last painting of Aborigines, Robinson's Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island was closed, and the forty-nine Tasmanian Aborigines who had survived a bloody British invasion and more than a decade of exile were finally allowed to return to their country. This brought about a new chapter in the visual expression of European relationships with the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land. The medium of photography was poised to bring with it novel opportunities to frame the lives of Aborigines in the European gaze, with a rhetoric that was to become emblematic of Tasmania – speaking of Aboriginal absence in new and enduring ways.

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<sup>608</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (Oxford: Phaidon, 1964). p. 12.

## Chapter 5 - Captioned Lives



Figure 100 - Henry Hall Baily, *Queen Trucanini, Last Aborigine of Tasmania*, ca. 1866-1876, photograph, inscription on verso, 'Truganini' Bonwick says she died in 1876', NLA.

*And when great souls die,  
after a period peace blooms,  
slowly and always  
irregularly...  
Our senses, restored, never  
to be the same, whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.*  
Maya Angelou, 1994<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Maya Angelou, 'Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens, and Mayfield', *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (New York: Random House, 1994). p. 267.

The reappearance of Tasmanian Aborigines in the pictorial landscape of Van Diemen's Land was not the sole responsibility of Glover and Gould. John Skinner Prout, around the time he visited the aging Glover at Patterdale, produced another painting that belatedly recognized that Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land could now be included in the same genre scenes as they had been appearing in other Australian settings.

After arriving in Sydney in 1840, Prout undertook several excursions in New South Wales, produced a number of paintings of waterfalls and fern tree valleys including Aboriginal figures. He completed his first portrait of an Aborigine following a trip to the Mt Kiera – Wollongong area in early January 1884.<sup>610</sup> Prout arrived in Hobart later that month, and it was only natural that he might create similar works in his new home. Prout's *Cascade Rivulet, Mount Wellington in the Background* (c.1845) incorporates a number of Aboriginal figures that, due to their location, are intended to be presented as Tasmanian (fig. 101).



Figure 101 - John Skinner Prout, c.1845, *Cascade Rivulet, Mount Wellington in the Background*, oil on canvas, National Library of Australia.

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<sup>610</sup> Kolenberg and Kolenberg, *Tasmanian Vision: The Art of Nineteenth Century Tasmania: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture from European Exploration and Settlement to 1900*.



At the time Prout arrived, the only Aborigines remaining on the mainland of Tasmania for the artist to see were those who had become incorporated into the colony and its cosmopolitan culture,<sup>611</sup> or had dissolved into sparse populations beyond the British frontier. As a result, his oil painting employs traditional figures that Prout probably sketched in New South Wales. The large skin cloak worn by the figure in the foreground is not typical of Tasmania, and the red headband was also uncharacteristic. A similar figure, this time wrapped in a white blanket, also appears in his oil painting, *Maria Island from Little Swanport* (c.1846). It wasn't long however, before Prout had an opportunity to abandon such convenient artifices when he made a visit to Robinson's Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island.

### *Agency in View*

Perhaps inspired by the paintings and sketches he had seen by John Glover, and as a continuation of his interest in Aboriginal subjects in New South Wales, Prout made the journey to the Aboriginal Establishment, known as Wybalenna, in February, 1845. He was accompanied by the painter Francis Simpkinson, with whom he had already exhibited in Hobart. These two artists each produced more than twenty portraits and landscapes featuring the exiled inhabitants. The bulk of Prout's work is held by the British Museum, while Simpkinson's drawings are in Royal Society collection of the TMAG. The first portrait completed by Prout was of an Aboriginal woman named Louise on board the sailing vessel taking them to Flinders Island (fig. 102).

This body of work is significant for many reasons. Firstly, despite their experience, these were far from a defeated people. The mortality suffered Tasmanian Aborigines at Wybalenna had been extraordinary. When Robinson concluded his journeys around Tasmania and finally arrived to begin his appointment as Commandant in October 1835, he took charge of 135 men, women and children. Robinson quit Wybalenna for a more lucrative appointment as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Philip

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<sup>611</sup> Robinson is unlikely to have removed all Aborigines from remote parts of Tasmania. Sporadic sightings of Aborigines continued until at least 1847. See James Erskine Calder, *Copy of a Letter by James Erskine Calder 'Upon the Existence of Natives in Unexplored Parts of Tasmania in 1847'*, ed. University Of Tasmania (Calder Papers: Special and Rare Materials, Royal Society Collection, 1847).

Colony after only three and a half years. He took Trucanini, Woureddy and thirteen other Tasmanian Aborigines to assist him. By that time fifty-nine had already died.<sup>612</sup>



Figure 102 - John Skinner Prout, *Louisa's Return on board the Alexander 1845*, drawing in pencil and wash, National Library of Australia.

A combination of contaminated water and an inadequate diet dominated by salt meat had taken its toll. Robinson embarked on his mission to Christianize the Aborigines while at the same time presiding over the deaths of a nearly half of those in his pastoral care; subjecting his malnourished prisoners to haphazard medical treatment consisting mostly of regular bleeding, blistering and enemas. At the same time, he supplied Aboriginal skulls, or entire skeletons to influential patrons.<sup>613</sup> In an effort to efface their old lives, Robinson commenced renaming each person with English monikers, often taken from Western literary or mythological sources.<sup>614</sup> Aware of these processes at Wybalenna, Major Thomas Ryan, the Commandant at Launceston complained to Governor Arthur,

<sup>612</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*.

<sup>613</sup> Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*.

<sup>614</sup> For example, Trucanini is renamed 'Lallah-Rookh' after a character in a Thomas Moore poem, while a child, Manney, was named 'Barnaby Rudge', the title character of a novel by Charles Dickens.



If it is the wish of the Government to propagate the species, it is our bounden duty to provide them all the means that are in our possession for the accomplishment of so desirable an end – if not, I tremble for the consequences, the race of Tasmania, like the last of the Mohicans will pine away and be extinct in a quarter of a century.<sup>615</sup>

Despite such adverse conditions, the Aborigines refused to give up their language, or cultural practices such as shell necklace making, and would often abscond on hunting trips for days at a time.



Figure 113 - King Alexander (left); Daphne (right) 1845, pencil and wash drawings, British Museum.

Several of the young men who had spent time at the Orphan's Asylum in Hobart used their literacy skills to publish a newspaper, *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle*. This was the first Aboriginal journal in Australia. When Robinson returned with most of the Aborigines he had taken to Victoria, defiance of the Establishment's regime had increased. Many of the inhabitants had re-commenced ceremony (corroboree),

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<sup>615</sup> Cited in Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 228.

wearing ochre and conducting ritual scarification in an act of cultural reassertion. One of Prout's drawings shows *King Alexander* (Moomereriner) clearly displaying his facial decoration in ochre and charcoal, and wearing a feather dead dress (fig. 103 left). At the same time, Robinson was being told that people wanted to be allowed to return 'home'.<sup>616</sup>

Another of Prout's portraits is of significance for a very different reason. *Daphne* (Dromedeener) is pictured wearing a coat and scotch cap (fig. 103 right). Moomereriner presents himself in cultural regalia, while Dromedeener has adopted new forms of adornment. Unlike Moomereriner, whose nakedness is loosely draped with a blanket, and his exotic otherness emphasized by cultural adornments, Dromedeener is one of the first portraits of a Tasmanian Aborigine dressed in European clothing. The inclusion of individuals in a variety of appearances points to evidence of a degree of agency not previously apparent in the work of colonial artists focused on representing Aborigines in their 'natural state'. Prout's portraits make explicit the diverse experience of individual Aboriginal people in not only surviving invasion and dispossession, but also in actively engaging with and negotiating a place in their new visual surroundings.

Of course, it is not possible to be certain that these individuals were able to exert free will in how they presented themselves for a sitting with the artist. But, as Elizabeth Findlay reminds us, while the Aboriginal subject of a colonial portrait may have had limited freedom in their physical surroundings, it is a mistake to assume that they are simply passive subjects for the enjoyment of the artist, or the amusement of the beholder. Such representations are, says Findlay, 'a vestige of a meeting between sitter and portraitist, and close visual analysis allows us to posit an interpretation of the nature of this meeting,' potentially revealing aspects of the engagement between artist and subject that confirm the portrait as more complex and nuanced than often realized.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*. pp 468, 491.

<sup>617</sup> Elizabeth Findlay, 'Relics of Encounter: Rapport and Trust in the Early Portraits of the Aborigines of New South Wales', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 14/21 (2014). p. 153.

While clothing makes the sitter subject to colonization, it also allows the colonial viewer a reading of the image with discernable agency. The noble savage (Moomereriner) may be sovereign of his domain, but this is an unknowable world to the beholder. The presence of clothing, on the other hand, offers up signs of co-existence between the exotic subject and the viewer. The savage in clothing can more easily be imagined to share familiar values and aspirations. They are humanized at a level recognizable to the European gaze. For Findlay, this is ‘evidence of Aboriginal maneuverings in settler society,’ and should not be assumed as a unilateral construct by the artist.<sup>618</sup>

### *Winning Freedom*

After Robinson’s final departure as Commandant in 1839, the colonial administration slashed funding allocated to the Establishment’s operation and his successor, Dr. Henry Jeanneret, instituted a ‘rigid and severe’ regime of neglect and abuse. The artists arrived soon after Jeanneret had been removed by the Governor, during a period of relative independence.<sup>619</sup> Within two years however, in response to rumours that Jeanneret was to be reappointed, the Aborigines wrote a series of petitions, including one to Queen Victoria, appealing that the previous commandant not be allowed to return. In the petition of 17 February, 1846, Walter George Arthur, Moomereriner and six other Aboriginal men reminded the British sovereign of the terms they had agreed with Robinson,

That we are your free children that we were not taken prisoner but freely gave up our country to Colonel Arthur then Governor after defending ourselves.

Your petitioners humbly state to Your Majesty that Mr. Robinson made for us and with Colonel Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since and we have made our part of it good.

Your petitioners humbly tell Your Majesty that when we left our own place we were plenty of people, we are now but a little one.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 246.

<sup>620</sup> An excerpt from the petition cited in Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*. pp. 148-49.

The response of the British Colonial Office was to interpret the Aboriginal claims as a request to return to their country, and it was recommended that Wybalenna be closed. On 18 October 1847, the forty-nine survivors arrived at their new home – a disused penal station at Oyster Cove, south of Hobart.<sup>621</sup> It had been thirty-five years since the first Aborigines, including Trucanini, had been taken into custody by Robinson's first mission on Bruny Island – the beginning of an epic period of exile from their land that had now ended. Sadly, this came too late for the chiefs Manalagena, Woureddy, Eumarrah, Montpeliater and others who had made agreements with Robinson that they would cease their resistance, and in return have 'all their demands met'. None of them lived to negotiate the detail of their requirements for reparation, let alone to see their country again.

The first known images of Aborigines at Oyster Cove are two simple watercolours by Charles Edward Stanley (1819-1849), who was posted to Van Diemen's Land by the Royal Engineers in 1846. *Natives at Oyster Cove* (1847) must have been made within two months of their arrival at the station. The second drawing *Aboriginal Women* (c. 1847) is possibly from the same visit, although this sheet is undated (fig. 104). The drawing offers an important glimpse of the Aborigines at a time when it is reported that there was great celebration, especially for Trucanini, whose country Oyster Cove was part of, and a number of others who were either from nearby, or who belonged to south west tribes who had made seasonal visits to the area before their exile.

Ryan reports that on their arrival, 'the Oyster Cove Aboriginal Station (was) plunged into ceremony lasting several days.'<sup>622</sup> Stanley's watercolour further establishes the recurring image of Tasmanians as fully clothed, and a further retreat of the noble savage from view. However, the image of Caroline (Drunemellyer, the wife of Moomereriner) details what might be a shell necklace or, more likely, a garland of flowers around her head, leaving a vestige of the exotic as a marker of difference. Two of the women are also shown wearing red caps, continuing to demonstrate their affection for red that was noted by the earliest French visitors to Van Diemen's

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<sup>621</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. pp. 250-252.

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.* p. 253.

Land.<sup>623</sup> In addition, Mary Anne can be seen wearing what might be a headband made of grass string or a strip of animal hide; another enduring tradition first noted by the French seventy-five years before.



Figure 104 - Charles Edward Stanley, *Aboriginal Women*, 1847, inscription on verso 'Three Aboriginal Women of V.D.L.', watercolour, National Library of Australia.

Stanley's picture also provides an insight into some of the morbid consequences of their detention at Wybalenna. Mary Anne, despite being partially hidden under a blanket wrapped around her shoulders is suffering from obesity, a result of the poor diet at the Establishment. According to Ryan the repatriated Aborigines endured a range of disease, including chest complaints, blindness, senility and arthritis.<sup>624</sup> The consequences of neglect<sup>625</sup> and excessive use of primitive medical treatments such as

<sup>623</sup> Early European navigators consistently observed a preference by Aborigines for gifts of red cloth, and noted their use of red ochre as a dressing for the skin and the hair.

<sup>624</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. pp. 251-52.

<sup>625</sup> A particularly severe example relates to Daniel (Gonenar) who fell into a fire during an epileptic fit and was left untreated by the surgeon. He was discovered by the medical orderly Alexander Austin, who reported to the Director of Hospitals in 1837, 'The wounds were covered throughout their whole length with fungus arising a full half inch above the level of the surrounding sound parts, and his body reduced almost to the appearance of a

phlebotomy also led to increased mortality and morbidity on Flinders Island. This process was to continue at Oyster Cove, with new pharmaceutical treatments such as Calomel or Mercury Chloride further impacting on health.<sup>626</sup> Other authors add venereal diseases to this list and note that the relocation to a much less controlled environment at Oyster Cove also exposed the Aborigines to liberal supplies of alcohol, which quickly took a further toll on the physical and mental health of a number of individuals and lead to the tragic death of Walter George Arthur.<sup>627</sup>



Figure 105 - Ludwig Becker, *Wata Kawodia*, V.D. Land, pencil drawing and wash (left); *Onodia*, pencil drawing (right), State Library of Victoria.

Stanley was just one of a number of curious visitors to Oyster Cove, eager to view the remnants of what was once a savage scourge of the colony. Ludwig Becker (1808-1861) is likely to have presented as an interesting character to the Aborigines when he

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skeleton.' Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*. p. 919.

<sup>626</sup> Peter Dowling, 'Mercury Poisoning at Oyster Cove? Suspected Cases of Unintentional Poisoning of Tasmanian Aboriginal Internees', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 11 (2006).

<sup>627</sup> Sally Dammary, 'Walter George Arthur: A Health Profile of a 19th-Century Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal Man', *Health and History*, 4/2 (2002).

arrived there in 1852, as he spoke English ‘badly but very energetically... draws and plays and sings, conjures and ventriloquises and imitates the notes of birds so accurately.’ Becker also wore a large red beard.<sup>628</sup> In the first (and only) exhibition dedicated to Tasmanian Aborigines in art, held at the TMAG and QVMAG between 11 May and 2 August 1976, eight works are listed by Becker. However, two of these have since been established to be Aborigines drawn in Victoria when the artist relocated there in 1853.<sup>629</sup> Three pencil drawings, and three watercolours are held in the Latrobe Library of the State Library of Victoria, including portraits of *Onodia* (Cunenner), who displays her use of a tobacco pipe, and *Wata Kawodia* (Wottecowidger), wearing a typical red cap (fig. 105).

Considered together, Becker’s portraits, like Prout’s, can be seen to engage successfully with the individuality of the subjects, with little trace of any interest in depicting a racial type. It might also be thought that Becker even managed to capture an attitude of disdain or ridicule from *Wata Kawodia* of the transaction between subject and artist – or perhaps the Aborigines were simply disconcerted by the eccentric German’s oddness! Certainly, Becker’s artistic heritage, with its strong focus on ethnographic taxonomies, meant that he is likely to have taken a closer interest in the many aspects of his subjects than other, less systematic artists visiting Oyster Cove. Whatever candor these artists were able to capture through their work was, however, about to be eclipsed by the next medium to be brought to the task of picturing the few survivors left available to the unrelenting colonial gaze.

### *The Last Aborigine*

On an unknown date sometime before 1876, a photographic session was held at the Liverpool Street premises of Henry Hall Baily. It might have been little different from any other, except that it would be the last time the elderly subject would sit for her portrait. This woman’s identity, and that of her people, would come to be defined by the briefest of documents; a few words scratched onto the front of the *carte-de-visite*

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<sup>628</sup> Marjorie J. Tipping, 'Becker, Ludwig (1808–1861)', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/becker-ludwig-2961>>.

<sup>629</sup> Marjorie J. Tipping, 'Becker's Portraits of Billy and Jemmy (Tilki)', *The Latrobe Journal*, 21 (1978).



produced that day (fig. 100). The caption announced the most profound of fates. Trucanini, by then renamed as Lalla Rookh, had become the 'Last Aborigine of Tasmania'.

Through this portrait, created some time just before her death in 1876, and others preceding it, Trucanini had become one of the most photographed individuals in the colony. Her face became emblematic of Tasmanian Aborigines during the closing years of the nineteenth-century as these images spread her fame. Trucanini had been present at George Augustus Robinson's first mission on Bruny Island in 1829 and played a key role in his subsequent journeys across the island, negotiating the surrender of all the remaining Aboriginal nations. She had witnessed the historic meeting between Robinson and Montpeliater – the symbolic end of the Black War. Trucanini had played the part of Hersilia in Duterrau's dramatic history painting of that event, in *The Conciliation* (1840). She had survived exile and captivity on Flinders Island only to be celebrated as the 'last of her race' and styled as an sign of an unambiguous end to the 'Aboriginal problem' in the colony.

The celebrity Trucanini enjoyed during her lifetime ensured that the *cartes de visite*, cabinet and post cards depicting her that were produced by photographers such as Winter and later reproduction studios were numerous, widely distributed and popular well into the first half of the twentieth-century. Ironically, the dissemination of her photographic image across the globe coincided with a simplification of her presence in popular history. Described during her lifetime as 'beautiful', and 'exquisitely formed', Trucanini was considered a heroine for saving Robinson from being killed during an abortive attempt to conciliate the Peerapper nation at the Arthur River in 1832.<sup>630</sup> 'Her mind', wrote Bonwick with romantic flourish, 'was of no ordinary kind. Fertile in expedient, sagacious in council, courteous in difficulty, she had the wisdom and fascination of the serpent, the intrepidity and nobility of the royal ruler of the desert.'<sup>631</sup> Displaying all the contradictory elements that the Tasmanian Aborigine manifested of the noble savage, she was also described as, 'but a savage maiden,

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<sup>630</sup> Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Trucanini: Queen or Traitor?* (Hobart: OBM Publishing, 1976). p. 19.

<sup>631</sup> Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land*. p. 217.

trained in the wilderness.’<sup>632</sup> In 1842, after being taken to the colony of Port Philip by Robinson, Trucanini had joined in a guerilla rampage against settlers and narrowly escaped being hung for murder.<sup>633</sup> However, this complex and ambiguous character, who had played an immensely influential role in shaping Van Diemen’s Land history was now reduced to little more than a caption. Her life, now summarised on a cheap, disposable calling card, had been diminished by what Edward Soja called ‘a myopia that sees only a superficial materiality.’<sup>634</sup>

In this chapter I briefly examine the history of photography of Tasmanian Aborigines in order to understand the processes of representation that culminated in the Baily portrait. The images produced are considered as constituents of a complex and ambiguous field, generated as artefacts of self-expression, collection and analysis, for exhibition and commodification. While we cannot know the extent of agency exercised by the Aboriginal subjects of this photography, or the quality of relations between them and their portraitist, we can be certain that, by now, they had all become familiar with the desire of Europeans to capture their likeness. Just as the French artists of half a century before had offered inducements of gifts to have their Tasmanian Aboriginal subjects sit, some sort of exchange is almost certain to have taken place to allow these images to be made – although by now the Aborigines were no doubt more discerning about the terms of trade.

These photographs comprise what Elizabeth Edwards calls ‘a simultaneous presentation of differently constructed and variously perceived spatial worlds and spatial dynamics,’ in which the figure of the noble savage was bent to the multitudinous interests and purposes of incipient consumer culture in the closing decades of the nineteenth-century.<sup>635</sup> In examining this material, I also explore the

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Leonie Stevens, 'The Phenomenal Coolness of Tunnerminnerwait', *Victorian Historical Journal*, 81/1 (2010); Jan Roberts, *Jack of Cape Grim : A Victorian Adventure* (Melbourne: Greenhouse Publications, 1986).

<sup>634</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).p. 7. Cited in Elizabeth Edwards, 'Negotiating Spaces: Some Photographic Incidents in the Western Pacific, 1883-84', in Joan Schwartz and James Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: Taurius and Co, 2003). p. 279.

<sup>635</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Negotiating Spaces: Some Photographic Incidents in the Western Pacific, 1883-84'. p. 279

‘moment of unease’ inherent in the depiction of Aborigines by these photographers, its relationship with power and authority, and the promise of representational truth. This moment is amplified by a caption repeatedly inscribed on photographic reproductions of these portraits; a tragic postscript to a people’s removal, appearing to define their identity, but ultimately failing to explain the context of their lives.

Walter Benjamin observed in 1936 that the photographer ‘diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient’s body’.<sup>636</sup> Karen Jacobs extends this analysis, suggesting the camera as an instrument that allows the user to peer within the obscure self of the subject, ‘the camera transforms the user into a virtual surgeon.’<sup>637</sup> There is brutal irony in this metaphor, as the very first attempts by colonists to objectify the Tasmanian Aborigine involved the literal dissection of those killed in the Risdon Cove massacre of 1804,<sup>638</sup> and continued at Wybalenna. From their earliest editions, the newspapers of Van Diemen’s Land had given voice to those concerned at the inhuman treatment of the native population in the face of colonial expansion. Yet when the social elite elected its first legislative council in 1851, with Anti-transportationists dominating the poll,<sup>639</sup> neither the legislature, nor the press were concerned that the few remaining survivors of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population were dying in confinement at a disused convict station a few dozen miles south of Hobart.

The Oyster Cove station had been Trucanini’s home since Robinson’s mission on Flinders Island was closed by order of Queen Victoria in 1847. It was at Oyster Cove that the first photographic images of this Aboriginal woman and the remaining members of her people were created. Trucanini is shown in the company of her husband, William Lanney (c.1835-1869). There is an appearance of relaxed

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<sup>636</sup> Karen Jacobs, 'Introduction', in Karen Jacobs (ed.), *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 27.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> The remains of Aborigines killed at Risdon were reportedly stripped of flesh and sent to Sydney as anatomical specimens. See Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History'. Robinson details multiple autopsy dissections in his journals as Commandant of Wybalenna. See Plomley (ed.), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*.

<sup>639</sup> Michael Roe, 'Anti-Transportation (of Convicts)', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), np.

resignation among their faces, enabled perhaps by the familiarity already existing between the photographer and his subjects (fig. 106). Frances Russell Nixon (1803-1879), the inaugural Bishop of Tasmania, arrived in Hobart Town in July 1843. That same year, Nixon made a pastoral visit to the Aboriginal people exiled on Flinders Island.<sup>640</sup> Some time before a second visit to the Fureneaux Islands in 1854, he obtained a camera and, in 1858, arrived at Oyster Cove to document the presence of the eight Tasmanian Aborigines who remained living there.



Figure 106 - Beattie Studios, *Tasmanian Aborigines, Oyster Cove "The Last of the Race"* (1), photograph c.1890, after Frances Russell Nixon, 1858, State Library of New South Wales.

Unlike any depictions of Tasmanian Aborigines before, Nixon's photos offer clues to the economic context of his subjects' lives at the time. In the background of another group portrait (fig. 107) can be seen indications of recent maintenance work, evidence that preparations had been carried out ahead of the Bishop's visit. A mass of debris is neatly piled and freshly sawn lumber is glimpsed behind the group. Nixon has

<sup>640</sup> Francis Russell Nixon, *The Cruise of the Beacon : A Narrative of a Visit to the Islands in Bass's Straits with Extra Illustrations and Photographs by the Author* (London, 1854).

partially concealed this intervention by positioning the group in front of the building materials. While there is no attempt by the photographer to compose the group into any semblance of noble savagery, the group portrait seems contrived to communicate a sense of nonchalance.



Figure 107 - Beattie Studios, *Tasmanian Aboriginals, Oyster Cove "The Last of the Race"* (2), c.1890, photograph after Frances Russell Nixon, 1858 photograph, State Library of New South Wales.

Vivien Rae-Ellis considers the photographs to ‘convey the former nomad’s air of resigned submission to imprisonment.’<sup>641</sup> That this might be so is not surprising, as the individuals depicted had been held captive for nearly thirty years by the time these images were created. But while some of the subjects look away in varying directions with apparent disinterest, and another is posed in an artifice of sleep, others regard the camera with a concerted attitude of mistrust and disdain. Of these, it is Trucanini in the rear at left who dominates the tableau with a returned gaze of defiant self-awareness of her place in the transaction.

<sup>641</sup> Vivian Rae-Ellis, 'The Representation of Trucanini', in Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), *Anthropology and Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). p. 230.

The beholder is drawn to these details by an inherent promise of photographic truth. Christopher Pinney describes this promise as,

the final culmination of a Western quest for visibility and scrutiny... the technological, semiotic and perceptual apex of vision, which itself serves as the emulative metaphor for all other ways of knowing.<sup>642</sup>

Nixon's photographs allowed Tasmanian viewers the idea of 'seeing' back into past events and lives. After a long and bloody war in the colony, these photographs offered a final confirmation of power for the colonists, entailing as Stephen Tyler argues, 'the hegemony of the visual as a means of knowing/thinking'.<sup>643</sup> However, as Pinney cautions, this 'ocularism' suffers 'moments of unease', which can be conceptualised as 'a stress on the deconstructive lines of fracture which both underpin and undermine photography's single-voiced authority'.<sup>644</sup> Trucanini, in confronting the camera, epitomises this. The quest for scrutiny encapsulates the moment of unease through tensions between the iconic and indexical, the aesthetic and the mimetic and the 'dream of invisibility invariably betrayed by its all-to-visible authority'.<sup>645</sup>

The ability to enjoy authority without visibility in the photographic image is compromised in the same way as it is in the painted portrait. Just as John Berger points to the absence of the 'principal protagonist' (the spectator) in the painted nude, even though 'everything is addressed to him... everything must appear to be a result of his being there'; in this illusory moment, it is for the beholder that the figures in these photographs present their exotic and diminished lives.<sup>646</sup> The beholder is fully clothed, in this case with the privilege of all that the Aborigines appear to have lost.

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<sup>642</sup> Christopher Pinney, 'The Parallel Histories of Photography and Anthropology', in Elizabeth Edwards and Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. (eds.), *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, 1992). p. 74.

<sup>643</sup> Stephen Tyler, 'The Vision Quest in the West, or What the Mind's Eys Sees', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 40/1 (1984). Cited in Pinney, 'The Parallel Histories of Photography and Anthropology'. p. 91.

<sup>644</sup> Pinney, 'The Parallel Histories of Photography and Anthropology'. p. 74.

<sup>645</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 1994). p. 135.

<sup>646</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. p. 54.

Do those Aborigines gaze out, as Berger's nude female does, inviting our look, rather than challenging it? Or are they simply passive subjects in the panopticon of the colonial gaze, where the camera momentarily breaks through to remind them of their 'permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'?<sup>647</sup>

Photographs, like paintings as they travel through time, form 'the deposit of a social relationship'. As Baxandall points out, these involve not only a creator, a patron and a use, but occur within a framework of 'institutions and conventions – commercial, religious, perceptual, in the widest sense social – that influenced the forms of what they together made.'<sup>648</sup> No matter how much influence the Aborigines were able to exercise during their time at Oyster Cove, no matter how much freedom they now enjoyed in comparison to their previous circumstances at Wybalenna, no matter how sophisticated their understanding of British manners and their ability to manipulate this, the institution of empire had already condemned them to a future that bore no resemblance to the sovereignty they had previously exercised over their lives. Trucanini's gaze is unimpeachably piercing, giving these images an unsettling power that was no doubt part of their appeal, but if there was a moment of unease for the late nineteenth-century viewer, it was dulled by knowledge that the subjects of these photographs, no matter how real, would not be permitted a share in the vibrant future that the colonists could now look forward to.

On arrival in Hobart, Bishop Nixon quickly associated with John Skinner Prout's artistic circle and would have become familiar with the portraits of Aborigines produced by Prout when he visited Flinders Island in 1845.<sup>649</sup> Nixon is also known to have introduced daguerreotypes to the Hobart portraitist Thomas Bock (1790-1855) at this time.<sup>650</sup> A decade before Nixon's arrival, Bock had painted Trucanini and other Aborigines when they was brought into Hobart prior to her exile to Flinders Island (fig. 108). Plomley notes that the Governor's wife, Lady Jane Franklin (1791-1875), was so pleased with the result that she requested him to produce further studies, 'in

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<sup>647</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punishment*. p. 195.

<sup>648</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). p. 1.

<sup>649</sup> Tony Brown, 'Francis Russell Nixon', (Design and Art Australia Online, 1992), np.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.



interesting duplicates, in profile, in neutral tint... so that the particular formation of the lower jaw of some of the Tasmanian Aborigines might be ascertained in any not to be seen in the principal portraits'.<sup>651</sup>



Figure 108 - Beattie Studios, Tasmanian Aborigines: Jinny, native of Port Sorell; Jimmy, native of the Eastern Coast; Truggernanner (Trucanini), native of Recherche, c. 1890, photographs after Thomas Bock, c. 1835 watercolours, courtesy of Douglas Stewart Fine Books.

While Bishop Nixon was obligated to take pastoral responsibility for their welfare, his interest in the Aborigines may also have been more self-indulgent. In the first commercial published book to be photographically illustrated, *The Pencil of Nature*, William Henry Fox Talbot enthusiastically promoted his newly developed photographic process,

One advantage of the discovery of the Photographic Art will be, that it will enable us to introduce to our pictures a multitude of minute details which add the truth and reality of the representation, but which no artist would take the trouble to copy faithfully from nature.<sup>652</sup>

Talbot, according to Gail Buckland argued that with his 'contrivance it is not the artist who makes the picture, but the picture which makes itself.'<sup>653</sup> In 1859, *The Journal of the Photographic Society* went further, describing photographic representation as 'an

<sup>651</sup> Brian Plomley, 'Notes on Some of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and on Portraits of Them', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 102/2 (1968). p. 53.

<sup>652</sup> Cited in Sonny Maley, 'Henry Fox Talbot, the Pencil of Nature, London 1844', <<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/Feb2007.html>>.

<sup>653</sup> Gail Buckland, *Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography* (London: Scholar Press, 1980). p. 43.

angel copier; a God-like machine of which light and sunshine is the animating Promethean fire'.<sup>654</sup> Such lauding conferred on the photographic image a quality of auto-representation that might be considered to grant 'mute testimony' of the subject in the image created. In this way, according to Carol Armstrong, the opportunities presented by Talbot's work belonged to a landed, or gentlemanly purview,

acquiring his subjects as components of a self-portrait for a man of possessions, ...a man whose objects and ownings, and amateur preoccupations, define his identity.<sup>655</sup>

The native subject of the photographer, like those drawn by the expedition artists of the century before, continued to serve the interests of a gentleman like Nixon in accumulating adventure and fame.

After twenty years in Tasmania, Nixon returned to London in 1862. Rae-Ellis reports that his Aboriginal group portraits were included in the International Exhibition of the same year, confirming that he was quick to begin promoting himself as a focus of celebrity.<sup>656</sup> In August 1866, Hobart-born professional photographer Charles Alfred Woolley (1834-1922) created a second series of images of the Aborigines living at Oyster Cove. Rae-Ellis suggests that it was the prominent Hobart social figure Louisa Anne Meredith, a friend of Nixon's, who suggested to Woolley that he should take up the subject, and to exhibit them.<sup>657</sup> Woolley quickly obtained a commission from Redmond Barry (1813-1880), the President of a committee established to organise the 1866-7 Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition, itself a preparatory exercise for the Exposition Universelle to be held in Paris the following year.<sup>658</sup> Woolley proceeded to create a series of group and individual portraits that immediately met with acclaim. The Mercury newspaper reported them as '...the best specimens of photography we

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<sup>654</sup> Cited in Pinney, 'The Parallel Histories of Photography and Anthropology'. p. 74.

<sup>655</sup> Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998). p. 142.

<sup>656</sup> Rae-Ellis, 'The Representation of Trucanini'. Curiously these do not appear in the major survey of British photography conducted by Roger Taylor, *Photographs Exhibited in Britain, 1839-1865* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, 2002).

<sup>657</sup> Rae-Ellis, 'The Representation of Trucanini'.

<sup>658</sup> Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (London: Duke University Press, 2005).

have seen in the colony... (forming) a most valuable ethnological series.'<sup>659</sup> Jane Lydon notes that Woolley was awarded a medal for his photographs, suggesting that this was elicited by his creation of multiple facial perspectives, according to 'developing anthropometric conventions.'<sup>660</sup>

As noted earlier, this was not the first time such systematic studies had been made. Woolley is unlikely to have seen the series of portraits drawn by Bock. Rather, his approach is thought to have been influenced by other photographers working in Australia at the time, who were employing the same methods in an attempt to document the 'vanishing races'.<sup>661</sup> In her exploration of the role of racial discourse in the development of the Melbourne Exhibition, Penelope Edmonds points to the irresistibility of extinction narratives in the representation of Aborigines by the Victorian and Tasmanian Courts, and it was probably here that the caption was first inscribed on the photographs to augment the obscure groupings that were denoted. Barry's ethnographic exhibition was designed in the belief that the 'social and intellectual improvement of Aboriginal peoples could be best furthered by scientific study'.<sup>662</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear from the juxtaposition of Aboriginal portraits, paintings of the baptism of Christ, and life-sized portraits of the Prince and Princess of Wales set amidst the paraphernalia of colonial industry displayed in the Tasmanian Court, that the overall narrative was of the triumph of civilization, Christianity and Empire (fig. 109).

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<sup>659</sup> Cited in Craig Clifford, *The Engravers of Van Diemens Land* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1961). p. 284.

<sup>660</sup> Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*. p. 91.

<sup>661</sup> Levine, 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination'. p. 200.

<sup>662</sup> Penelope Edmonds, 'We Think That This Subject of the Native Races Should Be Thoroughly Gone into at the Forthcoming Exhibition: The 1866–67 Intercolonial Exhibition', in Kate Darian-Smith et al. (eds.), *Seize the Day* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2008).



Figure 109 - Tasmanian Court, Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1866–67, photograph, from Edmonds, 2008.

By the 1860s, the growth of professional photography in Britain had resulted in the emergence of a large body of practitioners, eager to satisfy the growing demand for cheap portraits by the middle class. This expansion was driven by a vogue for the *carte-de-visite* portrait patented in Paris in 1854. Demand was particularly strong for pictures of celebrities. Edwards notes,

The years between 1860 and 1864 were seen at the time as a period of ‘cartomania’ ... estimates for British carte production at its peak in 1862 range as high as 105 million. These were being sold by the dozen for a sum of twelve shillings, with studios doing up to 30 sittings per day.<sup>663</sup>

That the photographic portrait should have established such immediate appeal is not surprising. In discussing the ‘extreme popularity of the portrait’, Henry Peace Robinson, in his influential 1881 essay *Pictorial Effect*, remarked,

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<sup>663</sup> Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*. p. 71.

photography has only developed and encouraged a desire for representations of those we love, honour, or admire, by giving us the means of producing portraits, not only within the reach of the humblest purse, for their cheapness, but that we can believe in for their truth.<sup>664</sup>

The prospect of truth in photographic portraiture is likely to explain the enthusiasm with which the customers of Hobart photographic studios purchased images of Aborigines. Few had actually met an Aborigine, yet all had been touched in some way by the decades of conflict. With this in mind, it is difficult to underestimate the level of curiosity that must have existed for a closer scrutiny of these enigmatic figures. The ‘truth’ of their existence, and their continuing presence in this new chimera form offered colonists a way to safely acknowledge and nostalgically mourn the inevitable passing of their former enemy with more intimacy and documentary realism than the comparatively crude engravings offered by Duterrau two decades before.<sup>665</sup>

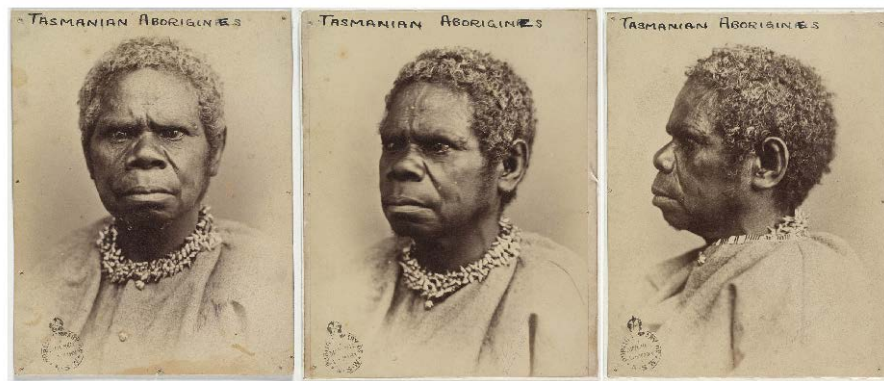


Figure 110 - Charles Woolley, *Tasmanian Aborigines*, (inscribed on verso ‘Lallah Rookh, or Truganini (Seaweed)’), three views, 1866, photographs, State Library of New South Wales.

Woolley’s studies are of two types. The group portraits are, apart from their studio setting, similar to Nixon’s. In the other images, each subject is shown with only head and shoulders visible (fig. 110). The women wear maireener shell necklaces, not seen in the group compositions. These adornments emphasised in intimate detail each individual’s personal, cultural identity. In the same way as Duterrau used these

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<sup>664</sup> Henry Peach Robinson, *Pictorial Effect* (Philadelphia: E. L. Wilson, 1881). p. 78.

<sup>665</sup> For an excellent discussion of ‘salvage ethnography’, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).

objects in *The Conciliation*, and his large-scale portraits, the necklaces also served to index the transfer of cultural dominance that had occurred with the ending of the Black War. Ironically, acknowledgement of these cultural objects also served to celebrate the success with which British imperial power had swept away the threatening world that produced them.<sup>666</sup>

The views in Woolley's portraits are rotated to show frontal, oblique and profile perspectives, creating a study set conforming to anthropological practice first applied by the Baudin expedition, under the instruction of Cuvier. Woolley may also have sought to emulate another ethnographic device by creating the first photographic images of naked Tasmanians. Anne Maxwell suggests that Woolley's desire to document a disappearing people,

was often overshadowed by the desire to create a comprehensive scientific record: on other occasions he insisted that his subjects pose naked, although they obviously resented the request, and he subsequently dispatched a nude photograph of Truganini to anthropological societies throughout the world.<sup>667</sup>

Maxwell's reference to these images seems an isolated one and no other record of such images was located in the course of this research. If these images exist, they will serve to re-emphasise the relevance of Berger's analysis above. Further research is warranted to confirm and document Maxwell's claim. As Philipa Levine points out, nakedness was not only useful to connote a state of primitiveness and savagery among colonized individuals; it also reassured the viewer of their vulnerability,

To photograph or draw the colonial subject naked was to demonstrate a particular form of epistemological power. In a society where nakedness was unacceptable, naked images connote the power of the viewer over the subject.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Aboriginal survivors of the Black War continued necklace-making on Flinders Island, trading necklaces and eventually stimulating European reproduction of necklaces. See Ray Norman, 'Necklace Making and Placedness in Tasmania', *Coolabah*, 11 (2013).

<sup>667</sup> Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representation of the Native and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leister University Press, 1999). p. 140.

<sup>668</sup> Levine, 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination'. p. 198.

Woolley's initiative neatly preceded a letter from the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) to the Colonial Office in 1869, requesting that colonial administrators provide naked photographs of local people according to the methods of 'anthropomorphic photography'.<sup>669</sup> This was the first time that photography was to be used to support Darwinian ideas of social evolution in an attempt to evidence the inferiority of native people. Indeed, the term 'anthropomorphy' had been invented by a seventeenth-century German physician, Johann Sigismund Elsholtz to measure correlations between body proportion and disease.<sup>670</sup> According to Elizabeth Edwards, the application of Huxley's methods were restricted to 'those over whom control was total', including prisoners in South Africa and Singapore. In a sentiment continuing the legacy of Dampier's 'miserable savages', the only non-convicts treated in this way were an isolated group in East Africa and Aborigines in Australia, 'a race, believed to be at the very confines of animality'.<sup>671</sup>

### *Grotesque Rebirth*

Contrasting markedly with Woolley's approach, and perhaps as a creative response to the new challenge of bringing the Tasmanians into the studio, another Hobart photographer, Henry Frith, produced a markedly different scene (fig. 111 left). Frith seems to have utilised a supplementary wardrobe in preparing his subjects. All are presented in fine attire, contrasting with Woolley's group portrait, where the subjects are dressed in coarse clothing provided at the station. Frith has the women wearing lace and neck sashes, with garlands of flowers in their hair.

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<sup>669</sup> Ibid. p. 189.

<sup>670</sup> Anne Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics 1870-1940* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008). p. 29.

<sup>671</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographing 'Types': The Pursuit of Method', *Visual Anthropology*, 3 (1990). p. 247. Cited in Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics 1870-1940*. p. 31-2.





Figure 111 - Henry Frith, *Aborigines, the Last of the Race, Tasmania*, c. 1866, photograph, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra (left); *The Last Surviving Natives of Tasmania*, engraving, Illustrated London News Historical Archive.

Along with his inclusion of columns in the studio scene, the photographer seems to have been offering the Aborigines to his customers with a provocative twist. Did he want to present them with some gaiety; an attempt to produce a novel product for the *cartes* market? If this was his intention it seems to have failed in its translation to metropolitan Britain. When the photograph was reproduced as an engraving in the *London Illustrated News* (fig. 111 right), it bore the caption, ‘portraits of four unhappy people, the last survivors of their race.’<sup>672</sup> Curiously, in the engraving, the columns have been replaced with a plain drape, stripping away any possible suggestion that a Classical Golden Age had been approached in Tasmania.

Edmonds refers to this representational complexity as ‘dynamic ambiguity’,  
 photographs cannot simply be reduced to signifiers of social forces and relations  
 premised solely on models of alterity, nor to models of spectacle and  
 surveillance within a political framework.’<sup>673</sup>

<sup>672</sup> Illustrated London News, ‘The Last Surviving Natives of Tasmania’, *Illustrated London News*, 1865 p. 13.

<sup>673</sup> Edwards, ‘Negotiating Spaces: Some Photographic Incidents in the Western Pacific, 1883-84’. p. 261.

The reality of their reception was shown by the *Illustrated News* publication to be far less predictable. This argument was amply illustrated in the 2006 exhibition *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art 1800–1900*, which demonstrated that the depiction of black people in Victorian Britain was as diverse as it was ambiguous. Amongst the painted Orientalist genre scenes and photographs, the palette of skin tone was as broad as the complex swirl of propaganda, homoerotica and spectacle that these images comprised. As Shearer West observed, ‘the colour black in itself had less overarching power as a signifier in the nineteenth-century than, for example, “African” or “Negro.”’<sup>674</sup> In the exhibition, several *cartes de visite* demonstrate how variously black celebrities could be depicted. King Cetshwayo of Zululand was shown in both traditional African and conventional English attire, while Queen Victoria’s god-daughter, Sarah Forbes Bonetta, ‘with her plain but fashionable dress, sits demurely with her hands crossed and a basket of sewing by her side like any other domesticated Victorian girl.’ Such constructed images, West reminds, offer little evidence of the lives of those depicted.<sup>675</sup>

It is difficult to imagine how colonial Tasmanian viewers might have placed Tasmanian Aborigines in this milieu of exotic caricature – even more so British and other European collectors who would also have seen these images as they filtered back to Europe. However, it is clear from the captions referring to impending extinction commonly inscribed on Tasmanian *cartes*, that Aborigines were most readily associated with inferiority and grotesque anachronism.

The inclusion of decorative columns in Frith’s portrait is particularly interesting, offering more than a reference to Classical ideals. Gisèle Freund suggests that columns are ‘the perfect homology for the standardisation of bourgeois society’, a suggestion echoing Walter Benjamin, who saw them employed as allegories of a ‘well-rounded education’.<sup>676</sup> Benjamin, with his dialectical imagination, is likely to

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<sup>674</sup> Shearer West, ‘Black Victorians: Black People in British Art 1800–1900’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 35/1 (2007). p. 331.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.* p. 332.

<sup>676</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999). Y4, 4, p. 677; Gisèle Freund,

have considered the depiction of well-coutured Aborigines as absurdly grotesque, set amidst studio arrangements that put ‘you in mind of both a boudoir and a torture chamber’.<sup>677</sup> This diversification of depiction of Aborigines is also likely to have offered additional appeal for those attracted by the idea of possessing an image of one of the ‘last of their race’. Unlike portraits of grand historical figures, whose biographical identities were tied to the narrative of their public lives, the modernity of the *cartes* permitted greater latitude for the purchaser as narrative author. Steve Edwards disparages the convenient pastiche of *cartes* portrait as,

bearing the signs of interiority, self-absorption and autonomy... but exist(ing) as incoherent fragments... the twist of a hip, the position of a hand: these elements from traditional painted portraits appear in carte pictures as random signifiers and empty poses.<sup>678</sup>

However, rather than being devoid of significance, he offers the argument that *cartes* were ‘not *entirely* empty signs,’ but reflected their own local circulation in a realm of everyday life. In both the gallery window of the studio shopfront and the cabinet or album of the collector, *cartes* formed movable elements in a spectacle that placed the sawyer, solicitor and celebrity within a single frame. Tasmanian Aborigines, once feared as violent savages, could now be placed alongside a Parisian dancer in a performance of grotesque realism,

The commodity carte fragmented and dismembered the portrait. It translated people into signs and established patterns of equivalence among them.<sup>679</sup>

For Andrew Winter, pre-existing social values and status gave way to commercial value, where ‘social equality is carried to its utmost limit.’<sup>680</sup> Yet, while this suggests

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*Photographie Et Société* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974). p. 68. Cited in Maxwell, *Picture Imperfect: Photography and Eugenics 1870-1940*. p. 31-2.

<sup>677</sup> Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*. p. 272; Walter Benjamin, ‘Berlin Childhood around 1900’, in Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (eds.), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935-1938* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002). p. 247; cited in

<sup>678</sup> Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*. p. 76.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid. p. 76

<sup>680</sup> Andrew Winter, ‘Cartes De Visite’, *Once a Week*, January 25, 1862 (1862); Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*. p. 79, cited in *ibid*, p. 79.

that the occupants of Oyster Cove were gaining a degree of social conformity, it also evidences the increasing commodification of their identity. As Winter describes,

the only principle governing the selection of the *cartes de visite* portraits is their commercial value, and that depends on the notability of the person represented.<sup>681</sup>

This generated what Steve Edwards refers to as a ‘perverse democracy’, offering only an illusion of equality. A further dimension to this intriguing realm of authorship is pointed to by Edwards, who notes that the collection of *cartes* portraits in albums was carried out ‘usually by women – who controlled these albums... producing a strange conjuncture of public and private worlds.’<sup>682</sup> Was this process also ‘random and empty’, or did it indicate a gendered re-ordering of the *carte*’s function as social deposit, and at the same time, the place of Tasmanian Aborigines in social memory? Up until this time, the patronage, creation and ownership of images of Tasmanian Aborigines had been dominated by men. Now their images had become a different kind of social currency, designed to be cheaply bought and gifted as a calling card – an expression of personality reflected in the subjects with whom one chose to be associated with, to collect, to own and to control through further distribution. In late nineteenth-century Tasmania – a without slaves or convicts – this was the only aspect of human life that was left to own.

### *Popular Death*

Baily’s portrait of an elderly Truganini remained popular well after her death. The image continued a tradition in which Tasmanian Aborigines, or more significantly the death of Tasmanian Aborigines, became a celebrated signifier of place for the colony. As the captions reminded the beholder, this was now a place with Aborigines reduced to their very last. For the beholder, this offered the promise of an encounter with a self-evident, unambiguous (and rare) type specimen. However, the value of these photographs as evidence or truth remained problematic. Talbot was the first to point

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<sup>681</sup> Winter, ‘Cartes De Visite’. p. 135.

<sup>682</sup> Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*. p. 81.

to the value of the photograph as ‘evidence of a novel kind’, but left open the question of how that evidence might be read at some future time. This points to an inherent difficulty in reading the testimony of a photographic document. Carol Armstrong interprets Barthes on this point,

...in the case of photography it is the illustration that is prior to the text that joins it and the text that is after the fact – the text that historiates the image, rather than the other way around.<sup>683</sup>

Barthes employs the term ‘historiation’ to describe the use of a visual narrative as decoration. However, Armstrong inverts this to suggest verbal decoration of a photograph. In doing so, she effectively describes the function of the caption as supplementing the photographic portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines with a narrative acknowledging the extinction of the threat to colonists and a heightening of the commodity value of the photographic object.<sup>684</sup> In this way the portraits confirm the opposition between the functions of authentication and legibility that Barthes sees as integral to the photograph. The result has been a privileging of surface over depth and a silencing of the dialogue between the two – exactly the consequence warned of by Soja.

An editorial in Hobart’s *The Mercury* newspaper from 1864 provided a poignant postscript to this flurry of photographic representation of Tasmanian Aborigines. It concluded a lamentation account of the fate of the natives depicted by Frith,

they are gone, and their extinction, as a race, was probably as inevitable, as it is inscrutable. As savages they were found, as savages they lived, and as savages they perished! Such an event is not one of every day occurrence. Who pretends to understand it? Who would undertake to assign the reasons for it?<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875*.p. 128-9.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid. p. 458

<sup>685</sup> The Mercury, *The Mercury*, October 22 1864 p. 2.

The penetration of what was left of Aboriginal lives at Oyster Cove by photography marked a momentous change in the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines. *Cartes* and the postcards that soon followed them, multiplied the presence of (or at least, images of) Tasmanian Aborigines in European lives beyond anything that had been seen before. From being obscure, noble savages in a far-flung corner of the Antipodes completely beyond European vision, over the space of just two centuries Aborigines had been transformed. No longer an abstract expression of medieval ignorance and fear, their passing had become a symbol of colonial achievement. Their images were altered into commodity objects for social entertainment. Through cheap availability of photographic pictures, everyday colonists could now hold what was once a terrifying and demonic scourge in the palm of their hand, content to see them in harmless senescence. This was, in many ways, a popular reward – a dividend that proved the ultimate worth of having to live through years of unsettling violence and bearing witness to what many recognized as an immoral deception.

However, these objects did not reinstate Aborigines into the colony's social fabric any more than Glover's dancing figures repopulated a landscape emptied by extermination. Rather, the photographs effected a further, even more profound disappearing, but this time in the form of a visible death.

Nadar, or Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820-1910), told of how his photography invoked in the French novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) a 'vague dread'. Balzac's explanation, according to Nadar, was that,

Every body in its natural state was made up of a series of ghostly images superimposed in layers to infinity, wrapped in infinitesimal films... each Daguerreian operation was therefore going to lay hold of, detach, and use up one of the layers of the body on which it focused.<sup>686</sup>

Marja Warehime discusses this in terms of Emile Zola's (1840-1902) short story *L'Inondation* (1880) and Balzac's *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu* (1831), in which Zola tells of an actual flood of the Garonne River, and Balzac describes events surrounding

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<sup>686</sup> Susan Sontag, 'On Photography', in David Rieff (ed.), *Essays of the 1960s & 70s* (New York: Library of America, 2003), p. 639.

a young Nicolas Poussin in his studio.<sup>687</sup> Each story relates to actual historical settings as authentications of the events. However, the stories are told, according to Warehime, through 'layers of imbrication' in which realism is presented through both the referential qualities of the narrative, and the discourse of the narrative concerning the pictorial realism of photography and painting. In Zola's story, photography documents the victims of the flood, linking its work to death. Zola sums up the expectations of realism attached to the photograph with the declaration that, 'you cannot claim to have really seen something until you have photographed it.' On the other hand, Balzac writes of the work of the painter, so perfect that the artist loses certainty that he has not created a real form, and suffers a consuming anxiety that his creation might fail in the presence of an actual beautiful woman. The realism of the painting is finally confronted when another artist fails to perceive its form.

Warehime notes to the limits of realist representation expounded by Zola and Balzac as,

the degree to which any representation can capture or reveal the essential qualities of its subject, because each story 'writes' the limits of visual representation in terms of the death or 'disappearance' of its subject.<sup>688</sup>

Referring to the writer's narratives, Warehime describes how, 'the representation itself calls attention to the death or absence of its 'real' subject without negating the operation of reference.'<sup>689</sup>

Photographs of the Oyster Cove Aborigines, like the photographs of the flood victims, or the young artist's perfect paintings, were able to represent and stand in for the subject, establishing the realism of an identity. There is no need for aestheticization to establish their association with the Black War or their inevitable defeat, because there is an evocation of a real subject. At the same time, photographs of Aborigines could be presented as victims of colonial progress without questioning the necessary and just cause of their victimhood. The people at Oyster Cove thus became objects of colonial scrutiny, but only to the extent that they represented the product of

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<sup>687</sup> Marja Warehime, 'Writing the Limits of Representation: Balzac, Zola, and Tournier on Art and Photography', *SubStance*, 18/1/58 (1989).

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid. p. 55.



colonization – the real lives of the Aborigines remained as inscrutable as their ancestors shown in the engravings and drawings by Webber or Petit. All that had been changed were the referential qualities (from an earlier narrative of discovery), and the discourse (from the narrative of classical engraving of the noble savage).

Through Zola's photographs and Balzac's painting, 'the representation serves to reaffirm an order in which the image is subordinated to a referent that it represents, but that it can neither supplant nor subsume.'<sup>690</sup> Like Balzac standing before Nadar's daguerreotype camera, the Aborigines may not have wanted to suffer a further death by being photographed, but the image reproduced in the photograph was already/always a representation created by the colonial gaze. In this way the photographs of Tasmanian Aborigines could remain satisfying for the colonial beholder, profitable for the reproduction studio, and achievable for the photographer – while at the same time reinforcing the achievement of empire. Yet the Aborigines present for the transaction remained as invisible as they had been in the landscapes of Lewin, Lycett, and even Glover; as invisible as the meaning of the pictograms and cicatrices observed by the Charles Lesueur and François Péron, the bark paintings by Henry Hellyer, or the petroglyphs by Archibald Meston.

The trope of absence had become so entrenched in Tasmania that artists operating in its colonial context simply could no longer see Aborigines as self-defined cultural entities, except through the displacing lenses of classical Arcadian idealism, distant unsettling savagery, or hopeless, self-defeating primitivism. The noble child of nature existed only briefly and ambiguously in the work of the earliest navigational artists, and was stripped away by the pragmatics of colonization and the opportunities presented by the bounded geography of Tasmania that suggested an ultimate solution to the Aboriginal problem might be available.

### *The Eternal Savage*

With the death of Trucanini in 1876, only one person remained in the public eye as a continuation of the presence that had for so long been rejected in Tasmania. Every

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<sup>690</sup> Ibid.

other Aborigine had disappeared from colonial view; the progeny of Aboriginal women and sealers who continued their lives on the islands of Bass Strait,<sup>691</sup> those scattered across the former frontier territories of Van Diemen's Land,<sup>692</sup> and the Tasmanian native men and women who continued their displaced lives in other European colonies of the Pacific or Indian Oceans.<sup>693</sup>

Fanny Cochrane Smith was one of eight Aboriginal children to be born at Wybalenna, and arrived at Oyster Cove with her mother Tarenootairrer, sister Mary Anne, and Nicermenic, who her mother had married while on Flinders Island. While some authors suggest that Fanny's father was a British boatman or sealer, their assertions are either inconclusive or contradictory.<sup>694</sup> Members of the Royal Society of Tasmania, drawing on documentation from the Flinders Island Establishment argued that her father was the Aborigine known as Eugene (Nicermenic).<sup>695</sup> In contrast, a publication in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* rejected this idea by using ethnological conventions of analysis, and referring instead to phrenological measurements and comparison of hair sample.<sup>696</sup> Despite this disputation, Fanny argued her cultural identity successfully to the Tasmanian parliament and was recognized with an annuity and a grant of land.

Disagreement over the identity of Fanny's father was never settled through these debates, based as they were on purely genealogical parameters. In fact, it was to become even more complicated when, during a recording of her singing by Horance

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<sup>691</sup> Cameron, *Grease and Ochre: The Blending of Two Cultures at the Colonial Sea Frontier*.

<sup>692</sup> Julie Gough, work in progress.

<sup>693</sup> See, for example Taylor Rebe, *Unearthed: The Aboriginal Tasmanians at Kangaroo Island* (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2002); Lynette Russell, *Roving Mariners: Australian Aboriginal Whalers and Sealers in the Southern Oceans, 1790-1870* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

<sup>694</sup> Brian Plomley and Kristen Anne Henley, *The Sealers of Bass Strait and the Cape Barren Island Community* (Hobart: Blubberhead Press, 1990). p. 63; Rae-Ellis, *Trucanini: Queen or Traitor?* p. 113-14.

<sup>695</sup> James Barnard, 'Notes on the Last Living Aboriginal of Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, (1889/90).

<sup>696</sup> H. Ling Roth, 'Is Mrs. F. C. Smith a "Last Living Aboriginal of Tasmania"?', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 27 (1898).

Watson in 1889<sup>697</sup> (fig. 112), Fanny volunteered that ‘my father was a whaler, left my mother, all gone.’<sup>698</sup> What does seem clear is that Fanny recognized Nicermenic as her father in relation to questions about her status as an Aborigine in the same way as she recognized her mother, Tarenootairrer. Fanny’s response treated these questions as they pertained to her cultural identity. Those seeking to reject her claim based on the possibility of her biological father being white were arguing something completely different – that Aboriginality should lapse if there was a mixing of the races.<sup>699</sup> In this context, arguments that Fanny was not the ‘last living Aboriginal of Tasmania’ appear as a new expression of the trope of disappearance.

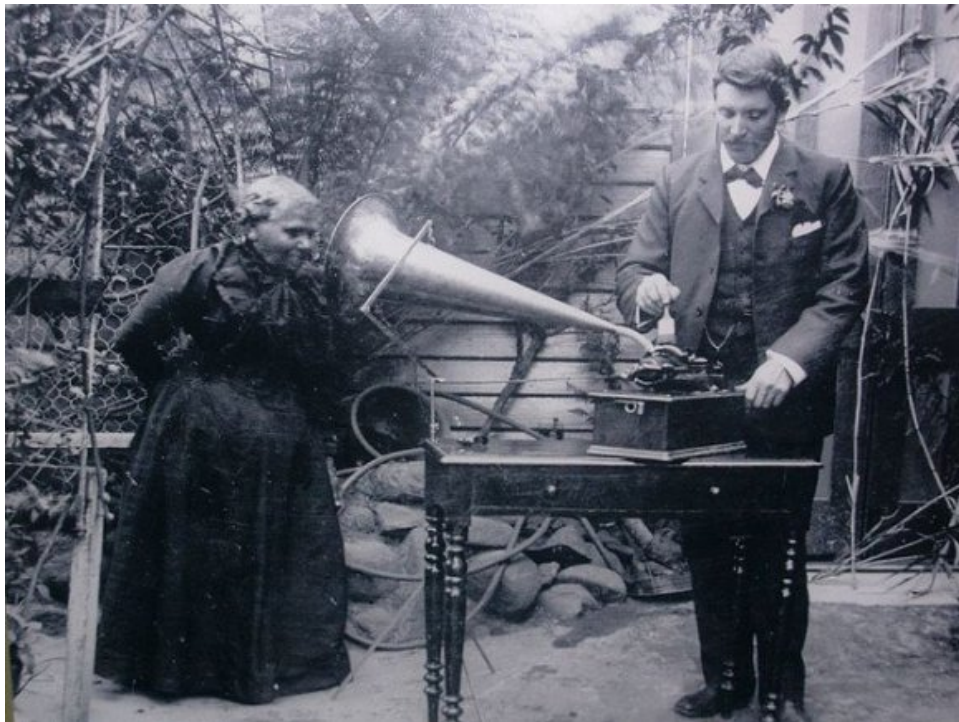


Figure 112 - Unknown, *Fanny Cochrane Smith and Horace Watson*, 1903, photograph, private collection, from Watson, 2011.

<sup>697</sup> Bruce Watson, 'The Man and the Woman and the Edison Phonograph: Race, History and Technology through Song', *Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, 1 (2011).

<sup>698</sup> Murray J. Longman, 'Songs of the Tasmanian Aborigines as Recorded by Mrs. Fanny Cochrane Smith', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 94 (1960). p.80.

<sup>699</sup> This theory was promoted by the Polish explorer, Paul Strzelecki, whose pessimistic view of Aborigines precluded biological integration. See Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997). pp. 12-13.

As I will discuss in the conclusion of this thesis, the enthusiasm to deny continuity of Aboriginal cultural identity that began with attacks on Fanny's rights has deepened the discourse of deficit and difference in Tasmania in a way that continues to manifest itself today. The argument is also significant to the extent that it illustrates a key difference between Tasmania as a British colony, and the diverse approach that prevailed in many French colonies.

The French openness to integration can be traced back to Samuel de Champlain (c. 1570-1635), who joined an expedition to Canada on behalf of Henry IV in 1602. According to Conrad Heidenreich, de Champlain was the first explorer in North America to conclude that successful establishment of colonial interests beyond the coastline required achieving good relations with native peoples,

to explore and live in Canada meant that peaceful relations had to be developed... involving reciprocal obligations such as mutual aid in war and trade.<sup>700</sup>

Publishing widely, du Champlain left an influential legacy, significantly challenging prevailing European views on Western technological and social superiority over native peoples. He argued that adoption of indigenous customs, and intermarriage between Huron and French were both essential to colonial success. This idea was never considered to a comparable degree by the British in their settlement of Van Diemen's Land. Indeed, the progeny of Aboriginal women and sealers were thought of as a major problem for British authorities, to be isolated and obliterated from society. In Tasmania, this led to the establishment of a 'Half Caste Reserve' on Cape Barren Island in 1881 to be used by the children of Aboriginal women and European sealers.<sup>701</sup> Legislation limiting access and movement of people on the reserve was the first institutional attempt by the Tasmanian government to constrain people who represented a continuation of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, despite the death of their tribally-born parents.

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<sup>700</sup> Conrad Heidenreich, 'Samuel De Champlain: Opening up Canada's Wilderness', in Robin Hanbury-Tenison (ed.), *The Great Explorers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010). p. 118.

<sup>701</sup> Shayne Breen, 'Aboriginal Islanders', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (On line edn.; Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), n.p.

As the nineteenth-century came to a close, the efforts by some to deny Fanny her identity can be seen as a last-ditch attempt at defending the investment already made in ridding the island of a threatening Other. The enthusiasm for Aboriginal absence was now moving away from the visual and appealing to a scientific rhetoric of eugenics.<sup>702</sup> This was a movement that extended fear of the savage in terms of the threat of miscegenation, a fear that would continue to strengthen well into the twentieth-century. The consequences of this new denial of Aboriginal presence was felt widely across Australia and perhaps most tangibly expressed in the segregation and assimilation policies of the early twentieth-century, aimed at removing Aboriginal children of mixed parentage from their families and seeking to induce them to forget their culture.<sup>703</sup> As Sarah Maddison observes,

The supposedly scientific, but in fact always political category of ‘race’ – measured by blood quantum and shades of skin colour – has been used to ensure that the population of ‘full blood’ or authentic Indigenous peoples was always on the decline, reinforcing the idea of white settler superiority and the apparent dying out of a genetically inferior race.<sup>704</sup>

Auber Octavius Neville (1875-1954), Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia from 1915 to 1940 was one of the architects of this process. He held a three-point plan to deal with the generation of children born to native parents (the majority of whom having European fathers). Firstly, the ‘full blood’ parents were expected to die out; secondly, the ‘half-castes’ would be taken away from their mothers; and finally marriage between ‘half-castes’ would be controlled to encourage intermarriage with the white community. To promote this process Neville wrote encouragingly,

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<sup>702</sup> See Jacqueline D'arcy, 'The Same but Different: Aborigines, Eugenics, and the Harvard-Adelaide Universities' Anthropological Expedition to Cape Barren Island Reserve, January 1939', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, 12 (2007).

<sup>703</sup> Charles Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1974).

<sup>704</sup> Sarah Maddison, *Beyond White Guilt* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2011). p. 51.

(the) young half-blood maiden is a pleasant, placid, complacent person as a rule, while the quadroon is often strikingly attractive, with her oftentimes auburn hair, rosy freckled colouring, and good figure...<sup>705</sup>

Neville's view, according to Colin Tatz, was a 'mishmash of nineteenth-century race theory, twentieth-century eugenics (and) his own brand of assimilationism.'<sup>706</sup> The products of this program, according to Neville, were the sort of people who could be 'elevated to our own plane.' This would make it possible, he went on, to 'eventually forget that there were ever any Aborigines in Australia.'<sup>707</sup> Tatz argues in his report that Neville and other twentieth-century Protectors of Aborigines operated with a 'repugnant intent' to,

await the 'natural' death of the 'full-blood' peoples and to socially engineer the disappearance, forever, of all those 'natives of Australian origin'. They were, indeed, progenitors of group disappearance.'

It has been my argument in this thesis that the trope of disappearance has much deeper origins, and amongst its true progenitors are Lt. Governor George Arthur, and his 'conciliator', George Augustus Robinson. Complicit in this task were the British picturesque topographers, academic painters, and even photographic portraitists of Van Diemen's Land. The accomplices, eager to salve a social conscience unsettled by the violence and deception suffered by Aborigines, and readily accepting the successive renditions of Tasmanian Aborigines as primitive, demonic, defeated and doomed, were everyday colonists. By the end of the nineteenth-century, the European population of Tasmania were more than comfortable with the idea of assimilation of the vestiges of Aboriginal presence – they considered it desirable.

The British approach of forced assimilation had almost nothing in common with de Champlain's vision of peaceful relations and reciprocal obligations. In fact, it was predicated on aspirations that were the very opposite. While the French model was

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<sup>705</sup> Cited in Colin Tatz, 'Genocide in Australia', *Research Discussion Paper* (8; Canberra: Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1999). p. 25.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

based on recognition and valuing of native technology, knowledge and alliance, the British rendered the Australian Aborigine as a people without value. Again, this can be interpreted as further evidence of the continuing trope in the Australian context of the hard and primitive savage, standing in stark contrast to Lescarbot's *vraiment noble suavages* as sovereigns of nature; the source of De Lahontan's 'native sense of justice', or of Voltaire's 'natural reason'.

The British imagination seems never to have shaken itself loose from the very first encounter with Australian Aborigines, or the legacy of William Dampier. All that might be hoped for in Australia, judging from Neville's lascivious assessment of the results of assimilating savage progeny, was to attempt to correct what George Forster observed in his *Voyage around the World* (1777), as the debasement of European prototypes of ideal female form. This process, originally intended to create hierarchical observations of various Pacific Peoples, is described by Nicholas Thomas as 'aesthetic evolutionism'.<sup>708</sup> Considered alongside Neville's vision of assimilation, it could also be seen as another pathway toward disappearing Aborigines – by transforming them into a European reflection of an ideal eroticized self.<sup>709</sup>

### *Memory and Forgetting*

Assimilationist attitudes in Australia developed in the early twentieth-century alongside protectionism, which emerged from the practice in Van Diemen's Land and other colonies of forcibly concentrating Aboriginal people into establishments, missions and reserves.<sup>710</sup> In Van Diemen's Land, the success of extermination practices had reduced the number of Aboriginal people being managed in this way to numbers smaller than in any other colony. Governor Denison, who had inherited this legacy of displaced Aborigines from a previous administration in 1846, just a year before the closure of Wybalenna, initially tried to take an interest in the Aborigines at Oyster Cove. However, after an invitation for them to attend a Christmas party in 1847 at Government House, newspaper reports revealed the paranoia that had festered

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<sup>708</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse* (University of Michigan Press, 1996). pp. xxviii–xxxv

<sup>709</sup> This parallel might be usefully explored in terms of Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex.

<sup>710</sup> Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*.



amongst colonists for a half century had not disappeared. Ryan relates how newspaper coverage of the event referred to the Aborigines as,

a 'rough set' of 'savages', whose 'fickleness of disposition' would probably lead them to 'commit depredations against the settlers'.<sup>711</sup>

According to Julie Gough, this event was a likely location for the earliest known photograph of Tasmanian Aborigines (fig. 113), made by Thomas Browne (1816-1870). The daguerreotype pictures three Tasmanian Aborigines who had recently arrived at Oyster Cove from Wybalenna; Mary Anne and her husband Walter George Arthur, and Thomas Bruney. Gough points to the composition of the photograph as 'structurally mirroring' Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840), arguing that the photograph amplifies the 'power, promise and politics' of this painting. Browne achieved this by employing the new medium of photography to place living people in a tableau to create a sense of authentic realism arguably missing from Duterrau's reconstruction of the event. In this way, says Gough, 'the image is embedded within the narrative of conciliation from the earlier, fictional painting.'<sup>712</sup> She goes on to argue compellingly that the photo 'promises more than it delivers... lend(ing) an uncanny veracity to the greater story of the supposedly willing exile of Tasmanian Aborigines.'

Browne focuses on just a small section of Duterrau's complex and tense scene, from which not only Robinson and the other twelve Aborigines, but also the dogs and necklaces so critical to the deeper narrative of the original painting are excised. In this way the photographer strips away elements of ambiguity to create new 'layers of imbrication' to the pictorial realism of the image. This probably served to appease Governor Denison, who may not have wished to be associated with a further (and unpopular) acknowledgement of Robinson, or any suggestion that the original scene may have been one of deception.

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<sup>711</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 258.

<sup>712</sup> Julie Gough, 'Forgotten Lives: The First Photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal People', in Jane Lydon (ed.), *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014). p. 24.

However, regardless of the transformations achieved by the photographer in his partial recreating the scene of *The Conciliation* as a *tableau vivant*, the representation fails to capture any more of the essential qualities of the subjects than later photographs by Tasmanian photographers. In fact, by posing the three Aborigines in a scene so emblematic of their surrender and its fatal consequences, Browne's picture contributes even more profoundly to their disappearance; compounding, rather than negating the 'operation of reference' referred to by Warehime.

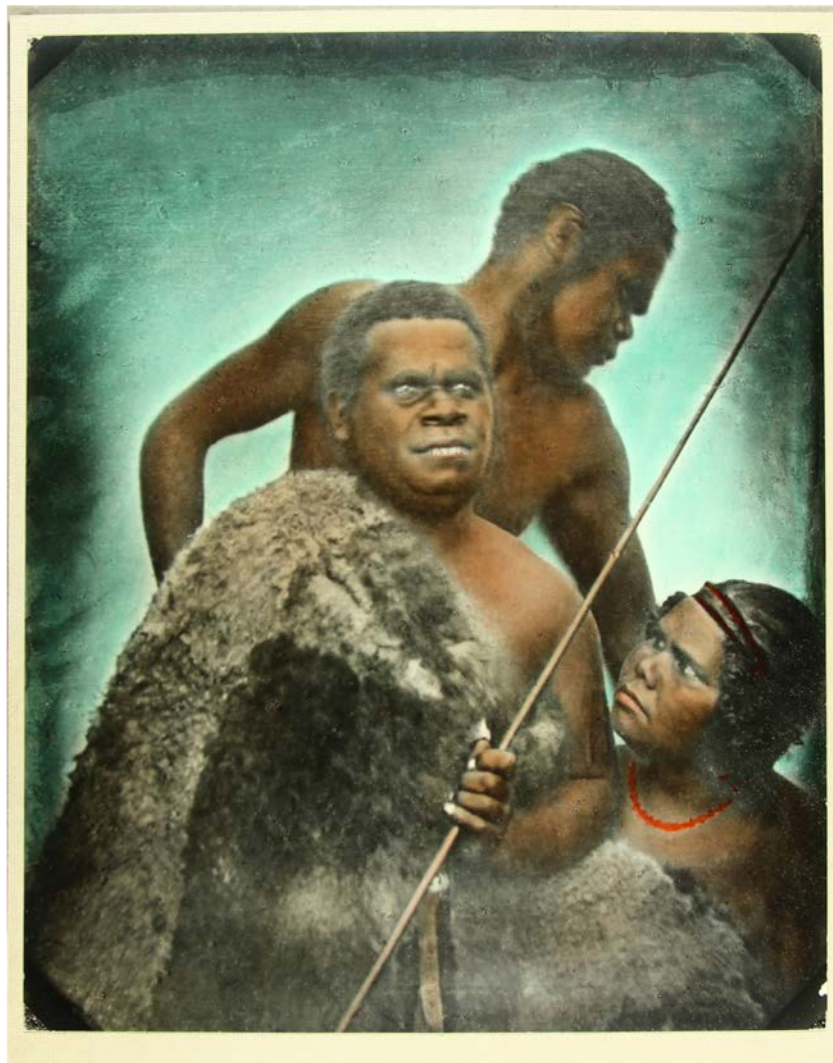


Figure 113 - Walter George Arthur, Mary Ann and David Bruney, c.1847-48, hand coloured photograph, c1930, from a daguerreotype by Thomas Browne, Museum of Victoria.

Over the next few years, many of the older women at Oyster Cove, including Trucanini who had cultural connections with the region, began to absent themselves for long periods from the Station. At the same time, younger members of the group

who had been influenced by the education offered at Wybalenna were also encouraged to separate themselves from their countrymen and women, in an attempt to assimilate them into the colony's workforce. Fanny Cochrane Smith followed this path along with many of the women and their children associated with sealers on the islands of Bass Strait. She married a local sawyer and established a place for herself as part of the thriving colonial economy – cutting shingles for the town, opening a boarding house and even performing her traditional songs and storytelling at Hobart's Theatre Royal.<sup>713</sup>

Meanwhile, prompted by the diminishing numbers of Aborigines living at Oyster Cove, the previous pattern of neglect and withdrawal of funding that had been applied at Wybalenna began to take its toll at the new facility. By the time Denison left Tasmania, seven years after the transfer of forty-nine Aborigines to Oyster Cove, only seventeen remained alive. Ryan points to a view among the administration that the Aborigines were responsible for their own demise; further evidence of a growing discourse of deficit, characterizing the Aborigines as miserable and unproductive.<sup>714</sup> Joseph Milligan, who had been in charge of the Flinders Island Establishment after the removal of Jeanneret, translated this from the dismissive sentiment of Dampier, into the science of Darwinism. He argued in a paper he published through the Legislative Council in 1856 that their population before British arrival could not have been more than 2,000 – effectively dismissing their viability as a race and casting them as a people of 'extreme primitivism'.<sup>715</sup> The Governor's Clerk and Magistrate, Hugo Hull (1818-1882) added to this when he declared in 1859,

There are five old men and nine old women living at the Oyster Cove Station – uncleanly, unsober, unvirtuous, unenergetic, and irreligious, with a past

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<sup>713</sup> J. Clark, 'Smith, Fanny Cochrane (1834-1905)', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* <{Flynn, 1967 #467}>; Watson, 'The Man and the Woman and the Edison Phonograph: Race, History and Technology through Song'.

<sup>714</sup> Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 253-265.

<sup>715</sup> Joseph Milligan, 'On the Dialects and Languages of the Aboriginal Tribes of Tasmania, and on Their Manners and Customs', *Journals and papers, Legislative Council of Tasmania*, 7 (1856)., cited in Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. p. 162.

character for treachery, and no record of one *noble* action, the race is fast falling away and its utter extinction will hardly be regretted.<sup>716</sup>

After being damaged by heavy floods in 1874, the site was finally abandoned and Trucanini, the sole remaining occupant, was removed to live with the family of the stations' superintendent in Hobart.<sup>717</sup> When Trucanini died two years later, there were considerable efforts taken to ensure that her body would not be removed from the grave to satisfy the demand for anatomical specimens that had plagued so many of her people.<sup>718</sup> Despite this, two years later, Trucanini's skeleton was exhumed by the Royal Society of Tasmania. In 1904 it was articulated for display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>719</sup> The caption that had come to characterize her and her people as the 'last of the race' remained in place in the display case until her skeleton was removed from view in 1947.<sup>720</sup>

The display of Trucanini's remains was perhaps the most somber and macabre example of ways in which colonial memory of Aborigines was expressed. During the time that her skeleton was on display, it reinstated the practice initiated by settlers of publicly displaying the bodily remains of Aborigines killed in frontier violence. Much like the gibbets of the previous century, this served as an institutionalized statement of judicial power and authority through capital punishment or extermination over those whose lives (and deaths) fell within colonial jurisdiction. Exhibitions persisted as a nostalgic reminder of colonial achievement well beyond the practice of nineteenth-century painters. After Ludwig Becker's visit to Oyster Cove in 1852, no further paintings of Tasmanian Aborigines are known to have been made from life. However, just as interest from most artists in depicting the aging Aborigines at Oyster Cove seems to have lapsed in the face of the enthusiastic reception of photographic portraiture, a young Launceston artist was only just embarking on a major project that

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<sup>716</sup> Hugo Munro Hull, *Royal Kalendar, and Guide to Tasmania for 1859* (Hobart: William Fletcher, 1859), cited in Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*. *ibid.*

<sup>717</sup> Julie Gough, 'Oyster Cove', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (On line edn.; Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), n.p.

<sup>718</sup> Anonymous, 'Funeral of Queen Trucanini', *The Mercury*, 1876 p. 2.

<sup>719</sup> David Hansen, 'Seeing Truganini', *Australian Book Review*, 321 (2010).

<sup>720</sup> Photographs of the display case exist in a number of collections. The image has not been included here out of respect for Trucanini.

would create the last major body of nineteenth-century paintings of Tasmanian Aborigines.

Robert Dowling (1827-1886) was Australia's earliest colonially trained professional artist. Dowling's father, Henry Dowling (1780-1869) was the first Baptist minister to arrive in the colony, and his son grew up influenced by the family's associations with the Launceston Benevolent Society, and the painters Henry Mundy (c.1798-1848) and Fredrick Strange (c.1708-1873).



Figure 114 - Robert Dowling, *Group of Natives of Tasmania*, 1860. oil on canvas, Art Gallery of South Australia.

Henry Dowling was also a close friend of the Reverend John West (1809-1873), author, historian and founder of the Launceston Mechanic's Institute. Importantly, Henry was also a friend of John Glover, giving Robert considerable opportunity to share in the famous landscape painter's interest in painting Aborigines. However, unlike Glover, Robert Dowling's principal interest was in portraiture. By 1850, when Dowling commenced work as a professional artist, Wybalenna had been closed. Dowling made frequent visits to Hobart, but is not known to have travelled to Oyster Cove. He is reported to have obtained tuition from Thomas Bock, who had completed portraits of Aborigines in watercolour for G. A. Robinson and Lady Jane Franklin.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>721</sup> John Jones, *Robert Dowling: Tasmanian Son of Empire* (1st edn.; Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2010).

Robert's older brother, Henry Dowling Jr. also commissioned Bock to produce for him a set of these portraits in 1837, prompted by his personal acquaintance with them during the period 1831-1833 when Robinson had made several visits to Launceston on his conciliation expeditions. At some time between 1853 and 1856, Dowling completed a series of copies in oil of Bock's watercolours. He used these, along with his experience travelling in Victoria where he painted a number of Aborigines from life, to create a series of three large group portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines.

Dowling's paintings were well-received, achieving a reception denied to Benjamin Duterrau, who had hoped that his grand history painting *The Conciliation* (1840) might be acquired by a public institution. However, as discussed above, the dynamics of opinion in the colony during the late 1830s and early 1840s over the treatment of Tasmanian Aborigines, and the flagging reputation of Robinson at that time, probably denied him that aspiration.

Dowling had no such difficulty. A large version of the artist's *Aborigines of Tasmania* (1859) was presented to the Launceston Mechanic's Institute in 1860 and hung in a place of honour in their grand Lecture Hall. Another version of the painting was purchased by the Ethnographic Society in London, and now hangs in the Art Gallery of South Australia (fig. 114). The public response to this work immediately drew parallels with Duterrau's painting, pointing out that Dowling's work 'contrasts strongly' with the earlier artist's history painting.<sup>722</sup> From their first exhibition, Dowling's group portraits were applauded for their aesthetic and historical qualities. It seems that Duterrau's grand project had come too early for the colony's taste.

It is notable that, even though Dowling's Tasmanian group portraits were more complex in their composition, they together with his individual portraits differ markedly in comparison to his individual and group portraits of Aborigines of Victoria. Unlike the Victorian natives, who in addition to animal skin cloaks are classically draped in blankets and wear shirts, trousers and hats, the Tasmanian Aborigines Dowling painted show no signs of European dress (fig 115). Instead, they are presented as simple savages, with one of the women, *Larratong* (Wymurick) depicted with bare, downward pointing breasts, following the 'aesthetic evolutionism'

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid. pp. 72-73.



promoted by Forster. Dowling seem to have pitched his representations perfectly to the public, with responded with eager acknowledgement. *The Cornwall Chronicle*, of 18 May 1857 acclaimed that,

Such works of art as these become more valuable with age, even now they must be looked upon as Historical paintings, of the primitive state of society in these colonies, banished by the light and progress of civilisation.<sup>723</sup>

Recognition of the memorial value of Dowling's paintings was enthusiastic, and characteristically predicated on the celebration of racial superiority and adherence to the familiar trope of absence. *The Examiner*, of 28 March 1857 declared,

We would like to see these pictures preserved in some public institution as memorials to the original occupiers of this land, who have all but disappeared before the onward progress of the white man.<sup>724</sup>



Figure 115 - Robert Dowling, *Larratong native of Cape Grim V.D. Land* c.1854-56 (left), *King Marpoura*, 1856 (right), oil on canvas, British Museum.

During the closing decades of the nineteenth-century, a scattering of other images appears, as a small number of professional and amateur artists test the waters of

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<sup>723</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>724</sup> Cited in *ibid.* p. 81.



historical reflection, and explore the challenges of aesthetic expression through the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines. However, it is clear from the extremely small number of known works that motivation for this artistic task was now reduced, influenced no doubt by changes in public taste and a desire to move on from a period of immense difficulties that severely tested the resolve of Britain to succeed with their colonial project in Van Diemen's Land. Such minor works will continue to appear and this will warrant continuing attention as each object creates further opportunity to interrogate the influence of ideas and traditions canvassed by this thesis.

### *A Gendered Postscript*

In closing this survey and analysis, it is essential to note that, with the exception of acknowledging the contribution of Jane Austen to the commonly understood conventions of staging in the picturesque frame, there has been no mention of women as artists, or as literary sources. In acknowledging this, I point to a significant failure of my research project to challenge one of the continuing limitations of working within the Western art canon; that is, the domination of male artists. One response to this is to actively uncover the work of female artists and to engage with the diversity of their expression in the same way as is usually done with their male counterparts. The problem with this is that women were not seen prior to the twentieth-century as full counterparts to the predominantly (and often exclusively) male dominated institutions of scientific inquiry or art practice. The result of this was a severe limitation on the number of women artists in Tasmania during this period, and an almost complete absence of women historians. As Linda Nochlin points out,

the white Western male viewpoint, unconsciously accepted as *the* viewpoint of the art historian, may – and does – prove to be inadequate not merely on moral and ethical grounds, or because it is elitist, but on purely intellectual grounds.<sup>725</sup>

Nochlin exposes the difficulties encountered in attempting to investigate the foundations of social injustice (as I am attempting to do with this project), when the

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<sup>725</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?', in Linda Nochlin (ed.), *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989). p. 145-46.

analysis is mostly dictated by unstated white male subjectivities. These result in what Nochlin calls ‘one in a series of intellectual distortions which must be corrected in order to achieve a more adequate and accurate view of historical situations.’<sup>726</sup> As a consequence, both the available historical and critical evidence is already manipulated throughout the literary and visual archive, severely limiting our ability to reach confident, valid conclusions. Steve Edwards goes on further to say that even an unconscious or intentional ‘additive’ strategy of including artworks by female practitioners will be flawed while these ‘value judgments that sustain the structures of art history are left in place.’<sup>727</sup> Without structural change, pointing out women artists suffers the inherent risk of signifying their work as either inferior or, at best, secondary.

Clearly the dimensions of the required structural change are beyond the realm of this project.<sup>728</sup> My response to this impossible challenge then is to accept, as Nochlin points out, that the gender distortions in the canon are just ‘one in a series of intellectual distortions’. I therefore place the paucity of work by women artists alongside other criticisms of representational validity already made with respect to structures of power and empire – including race, nationality and status of artists – and admit that my acknowledgement is wholly inadequate to the dimensions of this widespread issue.<sup>729</sup>

Just two sets of work by women artists have emerged in this investigation. One of these is by Mary Morton Allport (1806-1895), an artist who has obtained a place at least in the more limited canon of Australian colonial art. Allport is recognized as Australia’s first professional woman artist, who commenced advertising her work as a painter of miniatures in Hobart in 1832.<sup>730</sup> Allport’s contribution has also been

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid.

<sup>727</sup> Steve Edwards, 'Introduction', in Steve Edwards (ed.), *Art and Its Histories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). p. 8.

<sup>728</sup> See also Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>729</sup> See Rosalind O'hanlon, 'Gender in the British Empire', in Judith Brown and Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (4; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>730</sup> Gillian Winter, 'Mary Morton Allport', in Alison Alexander (ed.), *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (On line edn.; Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2006), n.p.

recognized in a number of exhibitions and publications, noting her work as a naturalist, portraitist and painter of landscapes.<sup>731</sup> However, none of these have identified the rarity of inclusion of Aboriginal figures in her pictures.



Figure 116 - Mary Morton Allport, *Fern Valley* c.1845, hand coloured lithograph, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania.

One such work by Allport is an undated lithograph of a typical scene titled *Fern Valley* (c.1845) (fig. 116). These genre scenes were common from south-eastern Australia during the mid nineteenth-century, with similar compositions well known among the work of Eugene Von Guérard (1811-1901) and Nicholas Chevalier (1828-1902). However, like other forms of landscape views these scenes rarely occur with Tasmanian Aboriginal figures in Van Diemen's Land. The other rare exception to this is John Skinner Prout (1805-1876) who produced numerous fern tree valley scenes between 1844 and 1848. Scenes such as these were regularly used as illustrative

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<sup>731</sup> For example Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image: Australian Painting, 1800-1880*; Kolenberg and Kolenberg, *Tasmanian Vision: The Art of Nineteenth Century Tasmania: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture from European Exploration and Settlement to 1900*.

plates in publications by colonial historians.<sup>732</sup> Allport's *Fern Valley* may date from around the time that Prout painted a similar scene (fig.110), and is one of the few other artists known to have used Tasmanian Aboriginal figures in this way.



Figure 117 - Unsigned (possibly attributed to Mary Morton Allport), *Derwent River from Montagu Point, with Aborigines*, undated, watercolour and pencil on board, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania.

Another possible work by Allport, unsigned and undated, was probably painted in the late 1830s.<sup>733</sup> The picturesque composition, with Aborigines in the foreground gesturing to what seems to be small boats landing on a beach and a distant sailing ship in the harbor, follows typical topographic conventions. The viewpoint takes in Montagu Bay, which is well south of Risdon Cove, so this scene is not consistent with a commemoration of Bowen's landing (fig. 117), but a freer picturesque interpretation that seems more concerned with aesthetics and nostalgia than colonial achievement.

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<sup>732</sup> For example Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians or the Black War of Van Diemen's Land.*, frontispiece James Backhouse Walker, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co, 1843). p. 35.

<sup>733</sup> Attribution of this work by is not certain, but its inclusion in the Allport collection at the State Library of Tasmania and its style suggest that it is by Mary Morton Allport, and it is acknowledged as such by the State Library of Tasmania.



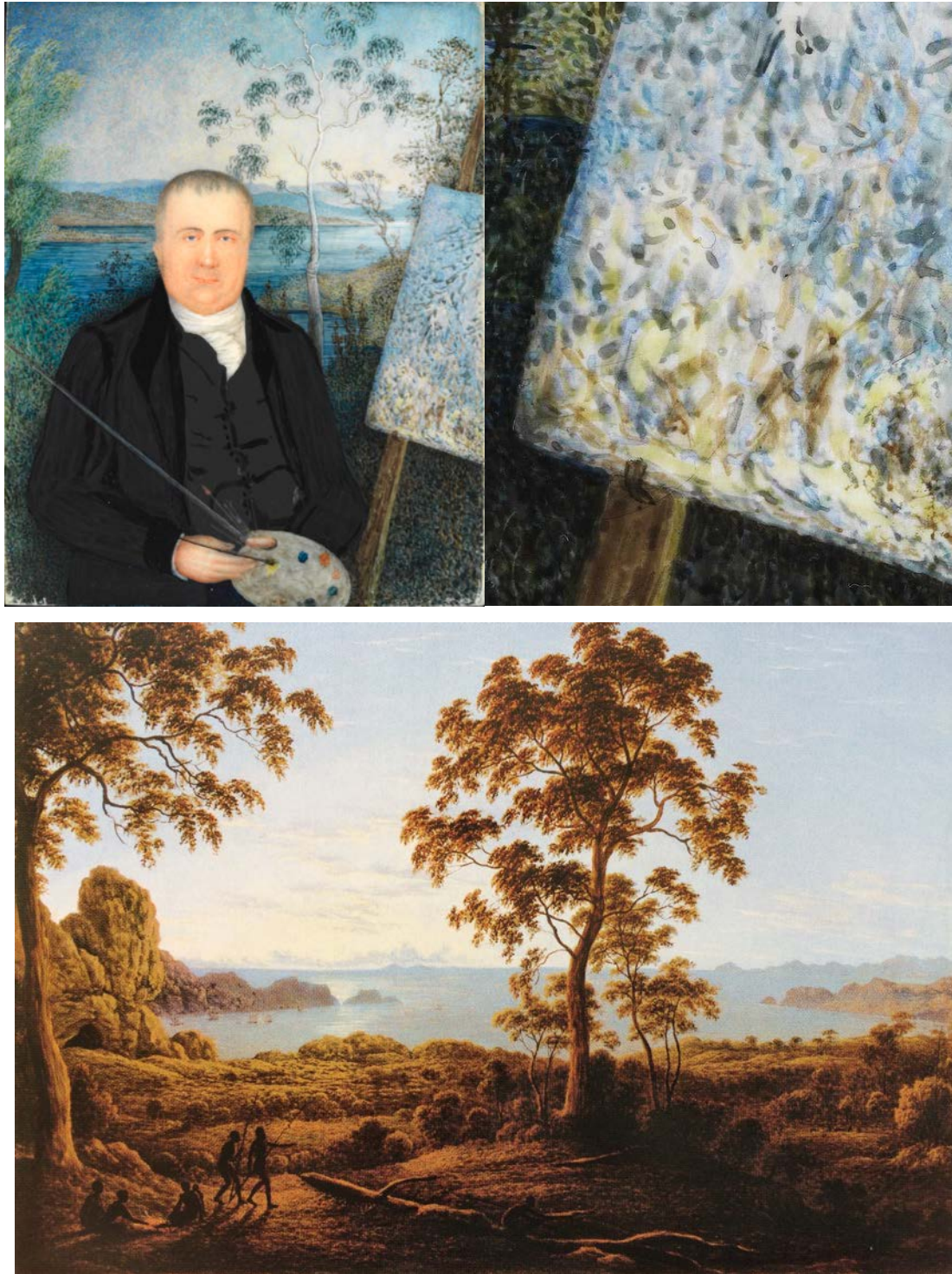


Figure 118 - Unsigned (attributed to Mary Morton Allport), *John Glover, artist*, 1832, watercolour on ivory, (above left); detail (above right) Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania; John Glover, *A View between the Swan River and King Georges Sound*, 1831, oil on canvas, the Westfarmers Collection.

The third Allport painting is altogether different, and displays the artist's inventive and confident approach, as well as a prescient understanding of the subject's significance. The painting, in watercolour on ivory, is of the artist John Glover (fig.

118). It shows Glover beside a painting on an easel, with a view of the Derwent River behind. Glover is shown with pallet and brushes in hand, working on a still-incomplete oil painting. In the bottom left-hand corner of Glover's painting can be seen the beginnings of several Aboriginal figures, easily identifiable by the lines of two spears. Two figures are standing and others are seated to their left (see detail, fig. 118).

At that time, Glover was yet to meet with the Big River Mob being brought into Hobart by G. A. Robinson, and had not relocated to his new home at Patterdale, although he had visited there the year before. Glover had probably been working on his *A Corroboree of Natives near Mills Plains* (c.1832), but this composition places the Aboriginal figures towards the centre of the scene, so is unlikely to be the work shown by Allport on the easel. This points to another painting that Glover is known to have completed the year before, and would have been in his possession at the time the artist sat for Allport.<sup>734</sup> *A View between the Swan River and King Georges Sound* can be seen to correspond very closely with the easel painting that Allport fictionalized as a work in progress based on the completed version she would have seen (fig. 118). A further clue to this can be recognized in Allport's duplication in the landscape behind Glover of the Eucalyptus tree that appears in the *Swan River* painting. Its trunk and branches are a sketch copy of Glover's tree, but Allport has painted it as a sapling, mirroring the easel painting – still to take its final form by the artist's brush.

Allport's insight in picking out two of John Glover's most celebrated subjects – Tasmanian gum trees and Aborigines – is astonishing, and speaks not only of her acute artist's eye and compositional genius, but may also allude to an understanding on her part that in the future, the landscapes of Glover's paintings might be the only places where Tasmanian Aborigines would be seen.

The other set of work by a woman artist in Van Diemen's Land is much more modest than Allport's. Fanny Benbow (1841-1917) has to date received limited art historical

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<sup>734</sup> Hansen, 'Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings'. p. 197.

attention,<sup>735</sup> but should be mentioned in this project if only briefly, as her drawings (c.1900) point to the importance of personal memory and visual engagement with the past. Benbow was six years old when the survivors of Wybalenna were landed at Oyster Cove, where she lived close by with her family. Amongst a collection of four drawings in the Crowther Collection of the State Library of Tasmania are recollections of her interactions with the people there. They stand out as one of the few visual records of European and Tasmanian Aboriginal people in non-conflictual settings since the drawings made by Jean Piron (fig. 34, 35) over two hundred years before.



Figure 119 - Annie Benbow, *Tasmanian Aborigines at Oyster Cove*, c. 1900, crayon on paper, W. L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania.

One of these works, in coloured crayon (fig. 119), shows Fanny and her young friends watching as some older Aboriginal residents of the station cut wood and cook over an open fire. The vibrancy and continuity of traditional Aboriginal culture is apparent in the drawing. A traditional kelp water carrier can be seen on the ground, one of the

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<sup>735</sup> See Gough, 'Forgotten Lives: The First Photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal People'; Hansen, 'Seeing Truganini'; Brian Plomley, 'The Westlake Papers: Records of Interviews in Tasmania by Ernest Westlake, 1908-1910', *Occasional Paper* (4; Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1991).



Aboriginal women's breasts are exposed, and red ochre can clearly be seen on their bodies and faces. They are all wearing their characteristic red caps. A younger, mixed-race woman is also shown with lighter skin colour, probably one of the Aboriginal youths at the station who had a European sealer father. Gough observes that, in contrast to the photographs taken by Nixon and others, these images offer a rare glimpse of how European clothing might have been adapted to Aboriginal preferences when away from the gaze of outside visitors.<sup>736</sup>

A second image, in black pencil (fig. 120), shows an altogether more somber scene. There are three Aboriginal women pictured. One lies on the path, apparently dead. Another woman bends over her, having placed both hands on her back to check if she is breathing. This is a rare record of Aboriginal death that is otherwise unseen in the archive unless associated with frontier violence or judicial killing. It marks the intensely human moment when a child is witness to the confusing and traumatic truth of mortality. Plomley records the Benbow's recollection of the event shown,



Figure 120 - Annie Benbow, *Tasmanian Aborigines at Oyster Cove*, c. 1900, pencil on paper, W. L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania.

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<sup>736</sup> Gough, 'Forgotten Lives: The First Photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal People'. p. 43.

Bessie was found dead and Lally said that Billy kicked her in the stomach when drunk... many I was fond of and I used to cry when anyone died.<sup>737</sup>

Fanny Benbow, in recreating these images for herself nearly fifty years after the events had taken place, testifies to the presence and power of individual memory and its potential to contribute intimate visual records of immense importance to the archive. Sadly, Benbow's drawings are almost unique in this regard.



Figure 121 - Thomas George Gregson, *Lieutenant Bowen and Party Arriving at Risdon*, 1860, watercolour, W.L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania.

In concluding this chapter, one further painting is worth noting, as it symbolizes the lingering penchant for romantic memorialization of Van Diemen's Land's savage first peoples in the late nineteenth-century. Thomas George Gregson (1798-1874) was a member of the Legislative Council of Van Diemen's Land at the time that Joseph Milligan presented his paper on the parlous state of Tasmanian Aborigines in 1856. The following year, after the colony achieved self-government and formally changed

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<sup>737</sup> Plomley, 'The Westlake Papers: Records of Interviews in Tasmania by Ernest Westlake, 1908-1910', p. 121.

its name to 'Tasmania',<sup>738</sup> Gregson became its second Premier. Shortly after arriving in Van Diemen's Land in 1821, Gregson was granted 1,000 acres of land on the Derwent River, overlooking the Risdon Cove, the site of the first British settlement, and subsequent conflict.<sup>739</sup> An amateur artist, Gregson expressed the nostalgic sentiment of the time with a watercolour commemorating the arrival of Lieutenant John Bowen (fig.121).

The view shows three longboats crowded with soldiers, convicts and settlers drawing up to the shore at the founding moment of the British colony in Van Diemen's Land on 10 November 1803. In the scene, a group of Aborigines, most sitting or reclining, passively watch the boats prepare to disembark. They appear to glance quizzically at each other, seeking answers to questions that they cannot ask. How could they know what was about to happen? They had been made absent since that historic moment and by the time Gregson painted the scene, colonial progress had rendered their primitive, chimeric presence redundant on the island. However, Gregson's painting is not entirely dismissive of the Aboriginal presence. The figures in Gregson's composition all have their backs to the viewer. As Michael Fried argued in his discussion of the realism of Gustav Courbet (1819-1877), this might be seen as an effort by Gregson to overcome the distant, theatrical relationship between spectator and artwork, 'to absorb the painter-beholder as if bodily into the painting.'<sup>740</sup> If Gregson's desire was to offer the viewer a position inside the illusory historical landscape of his picture, then we might see the painting as an early step toward an empathic relationship with the island's colonial past.

Unlike Glover's academic landscapes, Gregson's work is a closer resemblance to the picturesque scenes that were typical of the early topographers of Port Jackson. It is a measure of the disinclination to show Aborigines in the Tasmanian landscape that this early style of picturesque representation was delayed so long. The painting's appearance in the colony perhaps marks a moment of confidence in the future, coinciding with the granting of self-government and shedding of the name 'Van

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<sup>738</sup> Newman, 'Tasmania, the Name'.

<sup>739</sup> F.C. Green, 'Gregson, Thomas George (1798–1874)', *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gregson-thomas-george-2124>>.

<sup>740</sup> Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 132.

Diemen's Land', along with the unsettling memories of convicts, bushranging and the Black War. *Lieutenant Bowen and Party Arriving at Risdon* (and perhaps *Derwent River from Montagu Point, with Aborigines*) were the first paintings to take us back to the beginning moment of settlement and conflict. It may also, for the first time, suggest that the perspective of Tasmanian Aborigines on this event need not be excluded from the colony's future.

The painting is recorded as appearing in an Art Society of Tasmania exhibition in 1896. It was described in the *Tasmanian Mail* as 'a bold picture' – a suitable sentiment as Australia neared the moment of Federation. Tasmania was poised to take the significant step of joining the proposed Commonwealth of Australia. This offered an opportunity for a tentative engagement with its colonial beginnings that had by then been largely consigned to a gothic, parenthetical past haunted by the unspeakable legacies of genocide.<sup>741</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Lehman, 'Tasmanian Gothic: The Art of Australia's Forgotten War'.

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

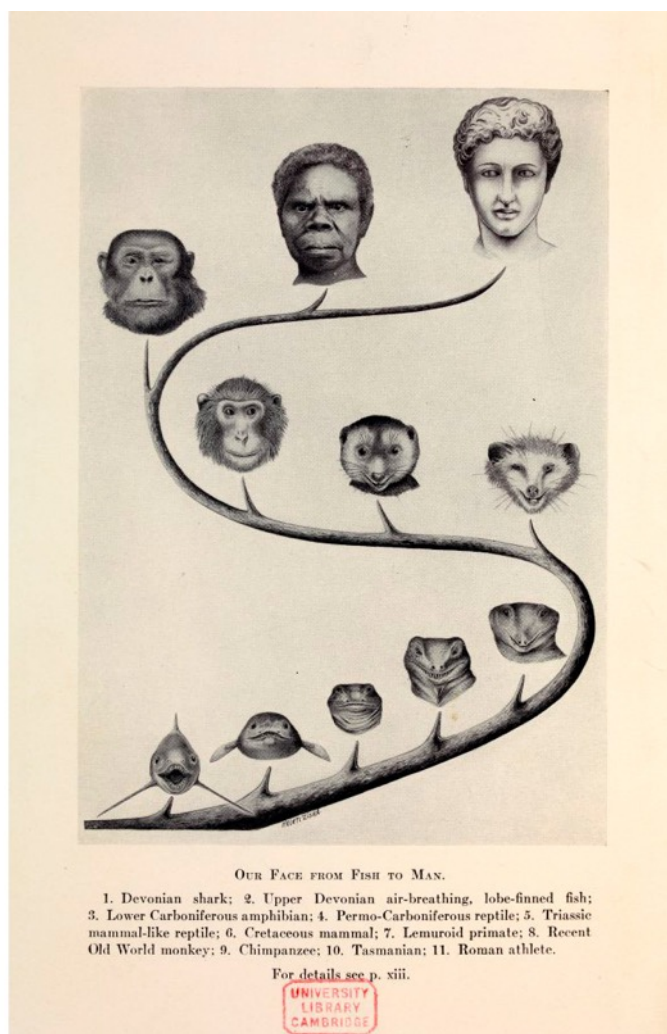


Figure 122 - *Our Face from Fish to Man*, from Gregory, 1929.

*The native of Van Diemen's Land, the lowest in the scale of human beings, unlike the rudest of the most ignorant of other savages, had no fixed place of residence; he neither planted, nor sowed, nor built a dwelling... Having no house, he had no home; and he had no tie to bind him to a particular spot...*

*It is to be observed that the natives of Van Diemen's Land are now to be spoken of in the past tense, for none exist at present in the colony; the remnants of the surviving tribes having been removed to an island, which they have to themselves...*

Charles Rowcroft, 1846<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> Charles Rowcroft, *The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land*, 3 vols. (1; London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1846). pp. 91-5.



The English novelist Charles Rowcroft returned to London in 1825 after spending four years in Hobart. His first novel, *Tales of the Colonies, or, the Adventures of an Emigrant* (1843) was the first significant Australian novel of the emigrant genre, in which the author expounds the advantages of taking up land in the colonies. *The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land* was his second novel. In it he described the character and necessary fate of the Tasmanian Aborigine. Rowcroft provides a vivid example of the narrative power of this character – more primitive, more prehistoric than could have ever been imagined to exist anywhere in the world. The Aborigine of Tasmania was something less than human, an emblem of the pitiful state of savagery in Australia,

Thus he had ever remained, so far as his history can be ascertained, the only being in the human form without a roof of some sort wherewith to shelter himself from the inclemencies of the weather... these records of their customs and habits refer also, mainly, to all the known existing tribes of the continental island of Australia still existing but fast disappearing before the exterminating approaches of the white people.

A mere wandering savage, without a home and without those arts, contrivances and tendency to intellectual development and progress, which the possession and the love of home engender... Thus they were mere savages, having only one thought, that of obtaining the day's subsistence, for they never provided for the morrow...'

The process of extermination was expressed by Rowcroft as an inevitable aspect of the colonial experience – the *sine qua non* of settlement in the face of an adversary beyond the conceivable bounds of humankind. If the Tasmanian Aborigine was incapable of protecting himself from the rain, how could he be expected to survive the storm of imperial change? Rowcroft's description of Van Diemen's Land served the same purpose as Lycett's *Views of Australia* (1824-5), expressing in literary form what Lycett's drawings communicated in the language of the picturesque.

Twenty years before Rowcroft's novel, Lycett had offered a periscope glimpse of the future. The function of his views was not unlike that of John White's drawings of Algonquian life. The Elizabethan artist and explorer's engraved drawings were

published in 1590 to promote the prospects of Britain's new colony in Virginia. However, White saw native people who he could use to communicate recognizable domestic interests and values. In the early 1820s, Lycett did not have such subjects to work with in Van Diemen's Land, as the island was deep in conflict. Indeed, it is likely that he and the other Van Diemen's Land chorographers were directed to ignore the troublesome Aboriginal presence by Governor Macquarie.

As I have shown, the scenes that Lycett presented were not real. His pictures deliberately ignored the existence of Aborigines in the Tasmanian landscape and around the fringes of Hobart Town to create a picture of serenity that could not have been further from reality. Lycett's Tasmanian views were the culmination of an imagined future in which no Aborigine could compromise the pastoral Eden aspiring émigrés of Britain were invited to dream of. In Rowcroft's analysis, and arguably in the sentiment of many late nineteenth-century Englishmen, there was no place for such creatures in the territories of the Empire. Perhaps, in the minds of many colonists, there was no justifiable place for them in the world. Charles Darwin neatly incorporated such an idea into his emerging theories when he wrote in his journal in 1838 of the situation in Van Diemen's Land,

The Aboriginal blacks are all removed & kept (in reality as prisoners) in a Promontory, the neck of which is guarded. I believe it was not possible to avoid this cruel step; although without doubt the misconduct of the Whites first led to the Necessity.<sup>743</sup>

While Darwin confuses some of the facts with the colony's arrangements for convict facilities at Port Arthur, or perhaps the original plan for the conclusion of the Black Line, he at least recognises that aggression on the part of settlers was instrumental in precipitating the subsequent extermination. However, this acknowledgement was not to express sympathy or support as some did against the injustice of the treatment of Aborigines in Tasmania. The exercise of aggression was seen by Darwin an inevitable

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<sup>743</sup> Charles Darwin, 'Journal and Remarks, 1832-1836', *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle* (vol 3; London: Henry Colburn, 1839). pp 532-36.



necessity in what would soon be famously known as the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Darwin added,

When two races of men meet, they act precisely like two species of animals, – they fight, eat each other, bring diseases to each other &c., but then comes the most deadly struggle, namely which have the best fitted organization, or instincts (i.e. intellect in man) to gain the day. – In man chiefly intellect, in animals chiefly organization, though Cont. of Africa & West Indies shows organization in Black Race there gives the preponderance, intellect in Australia to the white ... & in Van Diemen’s Land – they have been exterminated on *principles* strictly applicable to the universe...<sup>744</sup> (emphasis and abbreviation in the original).

Darwin’s conclusion was that the actions in the colony were cruel, but consistent with universal forces. As an Englishman, Darwin was also expressing the symbiosis between a science of natural selection and British nationalism. The unique geography of the colony, its advanced state of Englishness, and a perfect storm of European scientific, philosophical, literary and artistic traditions had combined to seal the fate of Tasmanian Aborigines. This was a case study with which to inspire the colonial world.<sup>745</sup>

The ability of the British to ‘reinvent the rules’ in Van Diemen’s Land, neatly avoiding the extensive visual documentation of Aboriginal ethnography, colonial violence and a consequently domesticated Aboriginal population as useful place-markers, was without doubt a result of two significant factors. The colonies of Van Diemen’s Land, unlike those on the massive continent of *Terra Australis*, were

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<sup>744</sup> Charles Darwin, *Notebooks on Transmutation of Species*, ed. G. De Beer (4; London: British Museum, 1960). p. 166.

<sup>745</sup> For further discussion of the impact of Darwin on visual culture see Diana Donald and Jane Munro (eds.), *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science, and the Visual Arts* (New Haven, Conn: Fitzwilliam Museum; Yale Center for British Art, 2009); Bronwyn Douglas, 'Novus Orbis Australis': Oceania in the Science of Race, 1750-1850', in Bronwyn Douglas & Chris Ballard (ed.), *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2008); Barbara Larson and Fae Brauer, *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms, and Visual Culture* (Dartmouth: University Press of New England, 2009); Jonathan Smith, *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

situated on an island. There was no vast interior into which Aborigines could retreat when threatened. More importantly however, as the English experience in Ireland had shown since the arrival of Henry II in 1171, it was the size of the native population and its ability to organize militarily that dictated the ease (or otherwise) of invasion.<sup>746</sup> It is my argument that this encouraged an outlook toward complete extermination from a very early time in the colony's history; an argument articulated thorough the visual rhetoric of colonial art. However, further research is required to determine the first appearance of this idea in the colony and the details of its persistence, and to test the hypothesis of this project that a political goal of extermination was an influencing factor in the development of the trope of absence.

Regardless of when this idea became established, it is clear that the confluence of a trope of noble savagery corresponding to the most primitive and ferocious natives imaginable, together with the visual postulation of an empty and available pastoral resource through a trope of absence, created a British idea of Van Diemen's Land in which there was no place for Aboriginal people. This was perhaps a unique context and opportunity for the British. But as I have argued in this thesis, the poorly defined and mysterious idea of the Antipodes stretching back to Antiquity, together with its association through sixteenth-century exploration as a place of savagery, mean that the desire to imagine a newly discovered place as empty and unthreatening has been a strong and long-standing one. Indeed, the first European reaction by Abel Tasman in 1642 to encounter with Van Diemen's Land, was precisely to avoid the necessity to engage, or document the region's human population. Tasmanian Aborigines at that moment were no more than an uninscribed detail of a place beyond a crudely charted coastline.

Martin Heidegger uses the term *sich richten in* to suggest that the work of art emerges in the conflict between earth and the world, an intimate conflict in which 'the truth wants to come to pass in, and adapt itself to, the work which presents the conflict.'<sup>747</sup> This interrelationship is referred to by Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak in her notion of

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<sup>746</sup> Ireland is noted as a useful comparison to Tasmania due to its similar size, for an account of Aboriginal tactics of resistance, see Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*.

<sup>747</sup> J. J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Springer Science & Business Media, 1985). p. 174.

‘worlding’, where an imperialist project assumes that the earth is uninscribed in order to begin, initially by cartography, to territorialize. ‘Now this worlding is actually also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood.’<sup>748</sup> In Van Diemen’s Land, the process of documenting an uninscribed world with imperial truth, also involved de-inscribing that which conflicted with that truth. According to Deborah Cherry, ‘in the imperial context, the work of art is not so much a product of ideology as a product of violence, born of a collision between two epistemes.’<sup>749</sup> Spivak elaborates this idea as constitutive of ‘the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project (resulting in) the absence of a text that one can “answer back”’.<sup>750</sup>

In Van Diemen’s Land, the trope of absence, through its constitutive images, provided the text of an empty landscape to which there was no answer. Unsettling acknowledgement of uncontrolled frontier violence, government oversight of vigilante roving parties, and the massive and costly failure of the Black Line became redundant. All of these subjects would have been a critical disincentive to the necessity for capital development of the Van Diemen’s Land colony at a time when discerning (and rich) free-settlers were urgently required. Instead, the visual rhetoric of a multitude of official views of the colony, all portraying a place without any evidence of threatening savages, was unanimous. The letterpress that accompanied Lycett’s Views trumpeted his epistemic plan,

Among all the various occurrences which constitute the history of human affairs, there are perhaps none calculated to excite such universal interest as the DISCOVERY OF UNKNOWN COUNTRIES, and the progress of ART upon the soil and people, which NATURE, resigns from her own creative hand to the care and culture of their civilized discoverers<sup>751</sup> (emphasis in the original).

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<sup>748</sup> Cited in Deborah Cherry, ‘The Worlding of Algeria in Nineteenth Century British Feminism’, in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts (eds.), *Orientalism’s Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). p. 106.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

<sup>750</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘The Rani of Simur: An Essay in Reading the Archives’, *History and Theory*, 24/3 (1985). p. 251.

<sup>751</sup> Lycett, *Views in Australia or New South Wales & Van Diemen’s Land Delineated, in Fifty Views, with Descriptive Letter Prefs.* p. i.

As I have shown, all of this became irrelevant once the Black War was over, and the only remaining Aborigines were either in far-flung corners of the island, remote from the settlement, or exiled to an island from which there was no escape. It can be no coincidence that 1832, when George Augustus Robinson brought the Big River Mob into Hobart, marked the beginning of an overdue proliferation of Aboriginal visual representations that had been common in Port Jackson a half century before. The period of this delay coincided exactly with the time it took to realize a bodily removal of Aborigines from the vicinity of the settled districts of Van Diemen's Land.

When Aborigines were eventually re-inscribed in Van Diemen's Land landscape, the need for 'epistemic violence' subsided. The rapid appearance of dancing, swimming, laughing Aborigines in John Glover's *Mount Wellington* view of 1834 was a precocious expression of modernism by Glover, casting Tasmanian Aborigines as transitory and fugitive, their appearance contingent on a project of colonial success that had insisted on, and already effected their actual removal. Just as important in this regard was Glover's systematic use of twilight for most of his Aboriginal scenes. As Huyssen points out,

Twilight is that moment of the day that foreshadows the night of forgetting, but that seems to slow time itself, an in-between state in which the last light of the day may still play out its ultimate marvels. It is memory's privileged time.<sup>752</sup>

Soon after Glover had painted his last Aboriginal landscape, the captioned lives of Tasmanian Aborigines photographed by Nixon and Woolley began to serve as the ultimate expression of the trope of doomed native – the 'last of their race'. This pervasive caption delivered the definitive statement of complete absence, and termed it as extinction. The caption is also the ultimate expression of circular ekphrasis, written onto the image and constituted as a rhetorical truth in the visual record. These captions have yet to be effectively challenged in art historical literature. This project commences that task by exposing their function in serving to punctuate the trope of absence in Van Diemen's Land.

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<sup>752</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995). p. 3.

Colonial photographers brought their 'scalpel like' penetrating gaze to bear on Aborigines, but wrote the limits of its own representative ability by having already posited the deaths of their subjects. The addition of these captions by the photographer, the reproduction studio or the purchaser, reconfirmed the imminent exclusion of Aborigines from Tasmania's living history and created the opportunity for indulgent, nostalgic memory. In a continuum of ekphrastic circularity, the layers that these photographs stripped away were not of their real essence as self-representative and expressive human beings, but of the exteriors that had been layered on them by European vision positing tropes of primitive savagery, absence and doom.

Throughout all of this, it was the idea of savagery that provided the dominant discursive theme, establishing patterns that have developed through later visual tropes. As we have seen, the noble savage is not a simple idea, but an ambiguous discursive formation that manifests in complex and diverse iterations. These iterations have formed around themes drawn from sources across Western history; Arcadians of the Golden Age living beyond the bounds of corruption and free of oppression – reflected in the heroic model used by Dryden; the child of nature, blessed with boundless resources in a virtual Eden – promoted by Smith in Virginia; and the noble sovereign of nature, enjoying privileges of European aristocracy, a source of naked reason – as Lescarbot's natural nobleman and Voltaire's window into the way things really are.

In the face of this complexity, Rousseau appears to often as a convenient and generalized reference, insufficiently understood and displacing the potential for a much more nuanced understanding of the complex idea of the noble savage as it exists within the vocabulary of European literature and art. However, throughout history, the noble savage has remained as a subject of enduring alienation; whether it be Tasmanian Aborigines on the fringes of British settlement in Van Diemen's Land, or Arcadians outside the walls of the Greek polis; they have been a symbol of colonial disenfranchisement.

This disenfranchisement of Tasmanian Aborigines from colonial institutions is a critical observation in terms of understanding the complex relationships between

discourse and knowledge, and the exercise of epistemic power through institutions. To date the consideration of paintings of Aborigines by Benjamin Duterrau and Robert Dowling have given this matter insufficient attention. Public institutions in Van Diemen's Land were reluctant to acknowledge artwork showing Tasmanian Aborigines until the acquisition of Duterrau's portraits by the Legislative Council in 1837. Duterrau's complex history painting *The Conciliation* (1840), or its larger version *The National Picture* (?) were probably hoped by Duterrau to be added to the Council's collection. However, they remained unsold at his death. In contrast, this ambition for institutional recognition was achieved by Robert Dowling. The younger artist succeeded by offering an uncomplicated memorial to the passing of a primitive people. In comparison, reception of the ambiguous and tense composition by the old Huguenot artist probably suffered because Duterrau was too close to the players in the drama he sought to convey. Dowling had the luxury of distance both temporal and spatial, as he completed his large works in the comfort of London in 1860. His work probably also benefited from the non-inclusion of George Augustus Robinson. Dowling's comfortable society upbringing and his hindsight of the work of Bock, Glover and Prout would also have assisted him to find a pleasing, nostalgic formula for representation of an otherwise difficult and challenging subject.

Duterrau, as Huguenot, may also have been exorcising his own ghosts. Questions about the extent to which the shadows of the St Bartholomew's Day massacres and the revocation of the Treaty of Nantes might have influenced his approach to depicting the events of the Black War point to the need for further scholarship on Duterrau. This may reveal a further propensity for earlier European traumas to be played out on the blank canvases of noble savagery.

Robinson's mission of conciliation and the grand spectacle of his entry into Hobart with the Big River Mob was so influential that it was reenacted in Jubilee celebrations on the streets of Hobart one hundred and twenty years later.<sup>753</sup> Relationships between warfare and social upheaval in Europe and events in Van Diemen's Land have been

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<sup>753</sup> An estimated 80,000 people lined the streets of Hobart in 1951 to watch a pageant of floats that included one including 'Robinson among the Aborigines'. See Lehman, 'The Devil We Know'.

shown in several instances by this project, and the identification of further linkages will be important.

In examining the varied articulations of savagery across the period considered in this study, I have exposed a colonial landscape in Tasmania purged of Aboriginal presence. Perhaps the greatest possible success of this project will be for it to serve as a call for rectification. Based on the plentiful evidence of Aboriginal presence around the colonial beachheads of Hobart and Launceston up to the mid 1820s, an important research task for the future will be to expand on our knowledge of these early interactions, building a social history of Tasmanian Aborigines that takes full account of this critical period in European place-making on the island. Only a more complete social history such as this can resonate authentically with a predominantly urban population in the twenty-first-century. Templates for this work already exist in the scholarship of Inga Clendinnen<sup>754</sup> and Grace Karskens,<sup>755</sup> who explore the ‘springtime of trust’, and history of race relations in the urban environment of Sydney Town.

Two hundred and twenty years after the frontier conflict in Van Diemen’s Land, there are still no memorials to either the Aboriginal people who were killed, or the European settlers who died. European conflict in Van Diemen’s Land was a crisis of the highest order for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and continues to be so. However, the visual record almost completely fails to present this idea. The consequence of this for Tasmania in the twenty-first-century is to disrupt memory and to obstruct the opportunity to grieve. The implication, as Judith Butler points out is that,

Some lives are grievable, and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and what kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary

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<sup>754</sup> Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005).

<sup>755</sup> Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin).



conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a liveable life and a grievable death?<sup>756</sup>

Duterrau's *Conciliation* presents the concluding act of a drama that implicitly involved the crisis of displacement, war and extirpation for Aborigines but, if anything, the crisis inferred today is one that mostly affected the settlers. Instead of any artistic commemoration of hard won conflict, we see only the pacification of violence, so essential, according to Norbert Elias, in the formation of the state.

In Elias' analysis of the social transformations necessary to advancement from the pre-modern, overcoming the propensity for violence in colonial Tasmania can be understood to have yielded relief from violent confrontation that had become part of day to day life for settlers.<sup>757</sup> This was achieved by demanding individual self-control and monopolizing power with the police, military and judiciary. In the world of Tasmanian Aborigines, the power of the warrior and the nation were supplanted by a constabulary, enlistment of settlers to the military operation of the Black Line, and the deployment of mercenary roving parties.

Such a condition, according to Mark Levene, 'both tells us who we are, while conjoined to the state, and it provides us with the promise, if not absolute guarantee, that our daily lives will be free from the threat of serious violence against our persons.'<sup>758</sup> What then follows is the ability to delineate land, natural resources and property through consistent administrative means – to create a 'legible society'.<sup>759</sup> Anthony Trollope, after his celebration of the superlative 'Englishness' of Tasmania, was also compelled to observation that,

We have taken away their land, have destroyed their food, made them subject to our laws, which are antagonistic to their habits and traditions, have endeavoured

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<sup>756</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004). p. xiv –xv.

<sup>757</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process, Vol. 2: State Formation and Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>758</sup> Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State: Volume 1: The Meaning of Genocide* (London: I B Tauris). p. 14

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

to make them subject to our tastes, which they hate, have massacred them when they defended themselves and their possessions after their own fashion, and have taught them by hard warfare to acknowledge us to be their master.<sup>760</sup>

The requirement for a legible society cannot be met while the realities of colonial Tasmania are so poorly acknowledged or interrogated in the visual archive. The persistent trope of hard savagery, while it continues to be simplistically apprehended, will continue to underpin a discourse of deficit for Aborigines in Tasmania, perpetuating structural foundations of Aboriginal disadvantage.

The cultural objective of this project has been to point to the importance of symbols and narratives, the themes of Vladimir Propp's folktales, and to draw attention to how these have contributed, through a series of visual tropes, as a discursive formation that maintains a discourse of deficit. The extent of this is too easily observed today. When the descendants of the First Tasmanians are brought to mind, our character is tainted by fear and distrust of the primitive savage, and a determined reluctance to acknowledge a continuing presence. The idea of necessity of imperial success continues to underpin a persistent belief that Tasmanian Aborigines have been responsible for our own misfortune. The greatest tragedy occurs when Aboriginal people themselves come to accept this as an essential element of identity. This, together with persistent enthusiasm to deny continuity of Aboriginal cultural identity – that began with attacks on Fanny Cochrane Smith's rights – deepens this discourse of deficit and the rejection of difference in Tasmania in a way will continue to manifest into the future if not challenged as the most violent of epistemes.

The problem with Voltaire's *L'ingénu* as 'little more than a blank' is that, like Abel Tasman's map of empty Antipodean interiors, it creates an empty space in the character of the savage (and therefore contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines) which is filled in by a European imagination, drawing almost exclusively on aspects of European vision that have been explored in this project. This blank, like the absence

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<sup>760</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Trollope's Australia*, ed. Hume Dow (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1966), p. 134.

in Tasmanian landscapes, was never real. It was only ever a virtual space created by European unfamiliarity with First Nations peoples and our diverse cultures.

Voltaire's Huron must be (metaphorically) repurposed in Tasmanian consciousness to expose the existence of this space in supporting misconceptions of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity, culture and memory. A good start would be to re-examine the journals of early French expeditions to understand that, rather than a necessary exposure of underlying savagery, it was indigenous agency being exercised when European misdemeanor was rejected by violent reaction. It was this agency that propelled the British into a state of war with Tasmanian Aborigines; and this agency that was excised from the visual record when it threatened to impede commercial success.

In doing this, it will also be essential to redraw attention to the rich evidence of self-representation that was encountered by the earliest European visitors to Tasmania, beginning perhaps with the very first misapprehension of the notches observed by the Dutch on a tree trunk in 1642 (see fig. 123). In this way, it will be possible to re-enable Aboriginal artists and scholars to start to sketch in more authentic understandings – to share in the ability of the savage, as Voltaire wrote, to 'see things as they really are.' Marks on trees and smoke from fires were the first visual clues for Europeans to the existence of Tasmanian Aborigines. This most basic aspect of visual literacy, a common part of both Aboriginal and European experience since our common origins, has enabled humans to observe each other's presence for at least half a million years.<sup>761</sup> Valuing and understanding Aboriginal self-expression, through a full range of visual and material culture offers a way to extend this simple beginning, and compensate for the consequences of two centuries during which most colonial Tasmanians turned their attention away from anything other than their own constructs of savagery.

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<sup>761</sup> Fire was being used by early hominids at least 500,000 years ago. See Clive Gamble, *Origins and Revolutions: Human Identity in Earliest Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). pp. 233-34.



Figure 123 - William Macleod, *Tasman's Carpenter Landing*, 1886, lithograph. Author's collection.

The continuity of Tasmanian Aboriginal practices of self-representation such as Maireener shell necklace making (fig. 124) through to contemporary art practice, means that it is not too late to rectify the lack of encounter with the existential character of Tasmanian Aborigines,<sup>762</sup> albeit two hundred and twenty years later than this might have been achieved by Europeans who have made their home on the island. The obstruction of such relationship building has been one of the most destructive and ongoing consequences of the tropes discussed in this thesis. Combined effects of the fear of savagery, imagining of absence and acceptance of doom, have resulted in a co-

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<sup>762</sup> See Lola Greeno, 'Maireener: Tasmanian Aboriginal Shell Necklaces', in Amanda Reynolds (ed.), *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Tasmania* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2006); Ray Norman, 'Jewellery and Cultural Identity: A Tasmanian Perspective', (Monash University, 1995).



Figure 124 - Dean McNicholl, c. 1995, *Aunty Dulcie at home with a picture of her children*. The draped necklace is a symbol of love and protection, photograph, National Museum of Australia.

existence of European and Aboriginal culture dominated by conflict, tension and misunderstanding. Contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal artists provide an opportunity for this long-overdue existential encounter,

Surveying the past, they have formulated cultural expressions that, while diverse in their execution and contextual setting, offer coherent stories of a living and flourishing creative culture allowing the viewer an opportunity to create a brief but profound dialogue to participate, just a little in the Palawa experience.<sup>763</sup>

The injustice suffered by those who lost their lives in frontier violence, and who, like Montpeliater, Woureddy and Manalagena, were deceived into giving up their land, might seem to be impossible to redress in the twenty-first-century. However, as I have argued in the past, contemporary Aboriginal self-representation, 'liberates us from the containment of history by offering memory as an expressive and rich alternative to the disservice we suffer from history.'<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>763</sup> Lehman, 'Being Here: Authenticity and Presence in Tasmanian Aboriginal Art'. p. 41.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

Ultimately, it is memory and memorial of Aboriginal people that awaits re-inscription into Tasmania's visual history if this is to have real integrity with the deep human history of the island. Currently, the visual history of Tasmania is generally considered to begin with European encounter when, in fact, the petroglyphs and rock art to be found on the island, and the cultural landscapes that we move through every day mark its true origins. This discontinuity in our island's visual history was engineered by Paterson and Macquarie, articulated by Lewin Lycett, Evan, and culminated to the creation of artifice and self-satisfaction by Glover, Nixon and many of the other painters and photographers who followed. All that their visual production provided, for the most part, was a validating documentation of the imperializing processes that led to the eventual disappearance of their subjects. It is necessary to look to Duterrau to find any explicit insight into the ambiguity and duplicity at play in the visual record of colonial Tasmania; while the quiet, personal images created by Allport and Benbow point to the importance of personal engagement and empathy with the common humanity of Aboriginal experience in the nineteenth-century.

Memorial for the Aboriginal people who suffered extermination, or genocide, at the hands of Tasmanian colonial authorities such as Lt. Governor George Arthur, his agents including George Augustus Robinson, and the settlers who participated in the roving parties and retributive attacks on Aborigines, is also absent in Tasmania. Unlike the plethora of memorials to the involvement of Tasmanians in overseas wars on behalf of Britain, there is not a single edifice offering public acknowledgement of the Black War, or the terrible toll of lives lost during the nineteenth-century.<sup>765</sup>

According to Dennis Schmidt, we owe a debt to the dead, which we repay through ethical treatment of the body and the institution of mourning,

We place the body in the earth, sealing a covenant that binds us to the earth, and we say words that open the possibility of a new space, the space of mourning the dead.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> The absence of frontier memorials in Tasmania is a microcosm of the lack of such commemoration across Australia. See Reynolds, *Forgotten War*.

<sup>766</sup> Dennis Schmidt, 'The Monstrous, Catastrophe, and Ethical Life: Hegel, Heidegger and Antigone', *Philosophy Today*, 59/1 (2015). p. 68.

Colonial graves of European dead are scattered across the island in their thousands. Yet, only one gravestone marks the burial place of a Tasmanian Aborigine who died before the end of the Black War. Prior to British arrival, Aboriginal dead were cremated and their remains buried in ceremonial structures that faded slowly into the earth. Their lives were remembered in song, dance and storytelling for generations afterwards. This memorial practice was profoundly disrupted by British invasion, causing not only the visual and bodily disappearance of Aborigines from the Tasmanian landscape, but absence of memorial to their passing. This absence reiterates the text of an empty landscape, and the worlding referred to by Spivak is reinforced; intensifying the epistemic violence wrought by colonial art in its lack of regard for Aborigines as having the same standing as everyone else who has fallen within its purview.

However, the opportunity for remembering the experience of Aborigines in nineteenth-century Tasmania – and acknowledging the legacy of their treatment for members of their families who survive today – is not lost. This will require finding and translating the ‘traces, residues, shadows and echoes,’ that inhabit Tasmania’s colonial archive, and involve ‘a continual sorting through the debris of time.’<sup>767</sup> Current scholars who have overlooked the trope of absence in colonial Tasmanian landscape art must re-evaluate their work to identify and articulate extended critical perspectives on its implications. The visual archive can no longer be read only in response to the explicit presence of Aborigines in art, but must question their ostensible absence. We must ask: where should we be seeing Aborigines and why are they not there? The non-materialistic historiography called for by Walter Benjamin will require, according to Iain Chambers,<sup>768</sup> the formulation of such new questions, ‘or else the most ancient of demands in new constellations, the chronicle constantly being re-written, re-viewed, re-presented.’ This is not a novel task. All that is required is for the same regard given to the value of European traditions, histories and presence in Tasmania to be extended to the savages as well.

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<sup>767</sup> Iain Chambers, ‘Migrancy, Culture, Identity’, in Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1977). p. 80.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.



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## Appendices

### *Relevant publications/events during candidature*

#### Chapter

'Becoming', in Alasdair Doyle (ed.), *Where Contradictions Collide*, Hobart: Alasdair Doyle, 2016)

#### Refereed Article

'Benjamin Duterrau: the art of conciliation', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 8/2 (2015),  
[https://www.academia.edu/12171364/Benjamin\\_Duterrau\\_The\\_Art\\_of\\_Conciliation](https://www.academia.edu/12171364/Benjamin_Duterrau_The_Art_of_Conciliation)

#### Non-refereed articles

'Fearing Trucanini', *Artlink*, 31/2 (2011),  
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#### Book Reviews

- 'Forgotten Voices', *Inside Story*, 21 December, 2015, Swinburne Institute for Social Research, <http://insidestory.org.au/forgotten-voices>
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#### Invited Catalogue Essays

- 'Writing Our Lives', in Sarah Thomas (ed.), *Colonial Afterlives*, (Hobart: Salamanca Arts Centre, 2015), [https://www.academia.edu/12419454/Writing\\_Our\\_Lives](https://www.academia.edu/12419454/Writing_Our_Lives)
- 'The Devil We Know', in Damien Quilliam (ed.), *Robinson's Cup*, (Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 2011),  
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## Newspaper/Periodical Articles

- ‘Oath Signed in Oil on Canvas’, *The Mercury Newspaper*, Hobart, 20 August, 2015 (opinion) <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/oath-signed-in-oil-on-canvas/story-fnj4f64i-1227490515007>
- ‘Money Can’t Buy Soul of the Nation’, *The Mercury Newspaper*, 9 July, 2015 (opinion), <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/talking-point-money-cant-buy-soul-of-this-nation/story-fnj4f64i-1227434081891>
- ‘An Artist’s Sardonic Take on a Quixotic Tragedy’, *The Mercury Newspaper*, Hobart, 13 July, 2014 (opinion) <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/sunday-soapbox-artists-sardonic-take-on-a-quixotic-tragedy/story-fnj4f64i-1226986729545>
- ‘Artwork Sparks Heartache’, *The Mercury Newspaper*, Hobart, 20 July, 2014 (opinion) <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/sunday-soapbox-artwork-sparks-heartache/story-fnj4f64i-1226994725334>
- ‘Looking for a Long-lost Hero’, *The Mercury Newspaper* Hobart, 28 December, 2013 (opinion) <http://www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/looking-for-a-long-lost-local-hero/story-fnj4f64i-1226790894055>
- ‘Coming to Terms with Tasmania’s Forgotten Past’, *The Conversation*, 6 February, 2013, <https://theconversation.com/coming-to-terms-with-tasmanias-forgotten-war-11333>

## Recorded Performances

- Walk With Me: Aboriginal Hobart*, 936 ABC Hobart, (occasional radio interview series, three episodes, 2013-2014), <http://blogs.abc.net.au/tasmania/2013/12/walk-with-me-aboriginal-hobart.html>
- Your Indigenous Tasmanian History*, 936 ABC Hobart (occasional radio interview series, ten episodes, 2011-2012), <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/03/15/3164475.htm>

## Curated Events

- Lines that Could be Scars*, ‘Antipodes’, Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne, 2016; Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, 2016, (collaboration with Tom Nicholson), <http://www.artdes.monash.edu.au/events/antipodes-with-madas-brook-andrew-and-tom-nicholson.html>
- Interview*, Off-set printed multiple posters, two-sided image/text, to take away, unlimited edition, 2016, (collaboration with Tom Nicholson)
- Ningher Canoe*, Dark Mofo/Museum of Old and New Art, 2014; (cultural narrative/blog) <http://ninghercanoe.wordpress.com/>
- Regarding the Savages*, ‘Investigations’, Plimsoll Gallery, Tasmanian College of the Arts, Hobart, 17 August to 8 September, 2013; (artist talk, installation) <http://www.utas.edu.au/plimsoll/exhibition/past-exhibitions2/exhibitions/investigations>



### *Relevant conferences during candidature*

- Galloping into History*, History Teacher's Association of Australia National Conference, Melbourne, 2015; paper – 'Alternative Histories: resisting a discourse of deficit'.
- Art, War and Truth*, Australian National University/Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 2014; paper – 'The Art of Genocide'.
- Message and Medium: a cultural cacophony*, Museums Australia National Conference, 2015, Sydney, 'Indigenous Reconciliation in the museums and galleries sector'; panelist.
- American Indian Images: making and breaking George Catlin's legacy*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2013; delegate.
- Visualizing Australia: Images, Icons and Imaginations - representing the continent at home and abroad*, 13th Biennial GAST Conference, Universität Stuttgart, Germany, 2012; paper - 'An Infamous Absence: Tasmanian Aborigines and the European Eye'.
- Creating Countries*, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2012; paper – 'A Burned Country: Aboriginal fire in art'.
- Interdisciplinary Indigenous History*, Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Australian National University, Canberra, 2012; paper - 'An Infamous Absence: Tasmanian Aborigines and the European Eye'.
- Imaging Nature II*, University of Tasmania, 2012; paper - 'The Conciliation: a Gothic Tale'.
- History at the Edge*, Australian Historical Association, Regional Conference, Launceston, 2011; delegate.
- Inspiring Science, Inspiring Australia: Telling Australia's Brilliant Stories*, Royal Institute of Australia, Melbourne, 2011; fellow.
- National Indigenous Studies Conference, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 2011; paper - 'The Rearview Mirror: visual representation of Aborigines in Tasmania'.

*Creative Work*



Figure 126 – Greg Lehman, *Reducted (Cook and Nuenone)*, 2013, set of nine ink-jet prints, from a drawing by John Webber (above); Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, 17 August – 8 September, 2013 (below). Author's collection.

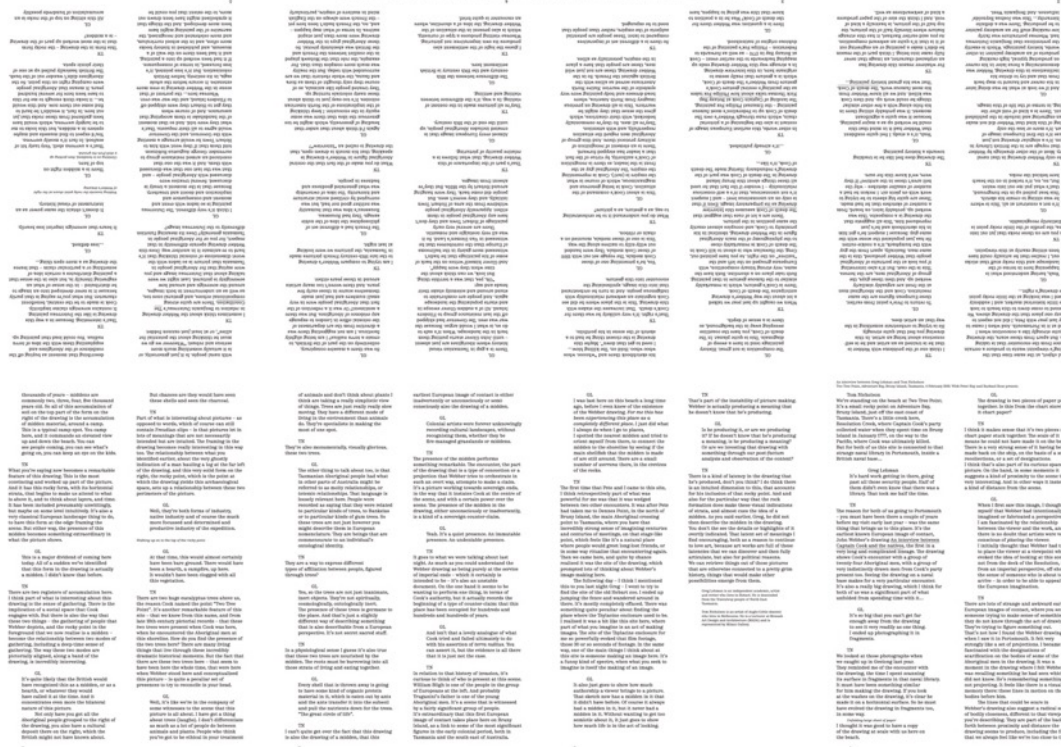


Figure 127a – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition.



Tom Nicholson

We're standing on the beach at Two Tree Point. It's a small rocky point on Adventure Bay, Bruny Island, just off the east coast of Tasmania. There's a little creek here, Resolution Creek, where Captain Cook's party collected water when they spent time on Bruny Island in January 1777, on the way to the Pacific, where Cook was ultimately killed. But for both of us this site is connected to that strange naval library in Portsmouth, inside a British naval base...

Greg Lehman

It's hard work getting in there, going past all those security people. Half of them didn't even know that there was a library. That took me half the time.

TN

The reason for both of us going to Portsmouth – you must have been there a couple of years before my visit early last year – was the same thing that brings us to this place. It's the earliest known European image of contact, John Webber's drawing *An interview between Captain Cook and the natives*, the first in a very long and complicated lineage. The drawing shows Cook's encounter with a group of twenty-four Aboriginal men, with a group of very indistinctly drawn men from Cook's party present too. Seeing the drawing on a naval base makes for a very particular encounter. It's also a really big drawing, which I think for both of us was a significant part of what unfolded from spending time with it...

GL

It's so big that you can't get far enough away from the drawing to see it very readily as one thing. I ended up photographing it in fragments.

TN

We looked at those photographs when we caught up in Geelong last year. They reminded me of the encounter with the drawing, the time I spent scanning its surface in fragments in that naval library. It must have been something similar for him making the drawing. If you look at the washes on the drawing, it's clear he made it on a horizontal surface. So he must have evolved the drawing in fragments too, in some way.

*Unfolding large sheet of paper*

I thought it was good to have a copy of the drawing at scale with us here on the beach.

1

GL

The drawing is two pieces of paper put together. Is this from the chart store? Is it chart paper?

TN

I think it makes sense that it's two pieces of chart paper stuck together. The scale of it means he could not have made it on the beach. There is a very strong sense of it having been made back on the ship, on the basis of a set of recollections, or a set of designations. I think that's also part of its curious space as a picture. On the hand, in some moments it suggests a kind of proximity to the scene that's very interesting. And in other ways it insists on a kind of distance from the scene.

GL

When I first saw this image, I thought to myself that Webber had intentionally imagined or fabricated a perspective. I am fascinated by the relationship between the viewer and the work, and there is no doubt that artists were very conscious of *placing* the viewer. I initially thought that Webber had tried to place the viewer at a viewpoint which evoked the idea of looking at this scene, if not from the deck of the Resolution, then from an imperial perspective, off-shore – the sense of someone who is about to arrive – in order to be able to appeal to the European imagination.

TN

There are lots of strange and awkward early European images of contact, where you sense someone trying to make sense of something they do not know through the act of drawing. They're trying to figure something out. That's not how I found the Webber drawing when I saw it in Portsmouth. It felt very strongly like a set of projections. I became fascinated with the designations of scarification on the bodies of some of the Aboriginal men in the drawing. It was a moment in the drawing where I felt Webber was recalling something he had seen which he did not know. He's remembering something, not projecting. It feels like there is a visual memory there: these lines in motion on those bodies before him.

The lines that could be scars in Webber's drawing also suggest a radical sense of bodily closeness, different to that viewpoint you're describing. They are part of the back and forth between proximity and distance the drawing seems to produce, including the fact that we always feel like we're too close to the

Figure 127b – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).

actual object, at the same time that the drawing's viewpoint wants to produce a certain distance from the encounter that is taking place. But apart from those scars, the drawing felt quite strongly like a concoction when I looked at it in Portsmouth. And when I came to Bruny last year with Pete, I did not expect to find any one place that the drawing shows. We happened to come down to this beach to look at the little historical marker, and I suddenly realised I was looking at the little rocky point at the drawing's right...

GL

Yeah, having understood what is happening here in terms of the landscape and this rocky stuff that sticks out, I realise that he actually could have been sitting exactly at this viewpoint.

TN

When you are on these rocks that jut out into the sea, the profile of the little rocky point is very distinctly recognisable.

GL

It's not a construct at all. This is where he was sitting to create his sketch. This boat pulled up in the foreground, that's what put me out into water. But, no, no, it's tucked in on the beach here behind the rocks.

TN

It's the only Webber drawing in that naval library. Most of the other drawings by Webber from that voyage are in the British Library in London. It's a singular drawing not just because it's the first European image of contact. It's more or less the only drawing of this kind that Webber did not make into an engraving and include in the published account. There is a kind of void after the drawing, in terms of the life of this image.

GL

And if we look at what he was doing later in his career and hazard to map back from that and try to divine his inclinations in this drawing, Webber was demonstrating a focus later in his career on producing typical, high-ranking products of an academy painter: in other words, history paintings. Which is exactly the pretensions that Benjamin Dutereau had. Whereas portraiture was fairly low-ranking stuff for an academy painter to be producing. There was a definite hierarchy... This was Joshua Reynolds' influence. And Benjamin West.

2

TN

I think one of the problems with Webber is that he is trained as an artist and he is self-conscious about being an artist. In this drawing you feel that quite strongly. He is trying to orchestrate something in the way that an artist does.

GL

To return to Pete's point from earlier, these European figures are the same resolution. Cook and the Aboriginal man at the front are arguably similarly worked up. And then these guys, the group of Aboriginal men, are the heroes. This is the cast. But it's also interesting if you look at the portraits of Aboriginal people that Webber produced, this is the same man. Basically, apart from the guy with the humpback, it's a cookie-cutter. He has just populated the scene with the same guy. Because I suspect he's got him in his sketchbook and he's just reproduced him. This all suggests that the drawing is a composite. This was worked up, probably later, on board, from a number of sketches that he had made. These are quite big sheets to be trying to work with *en plein air*. I reckon he had a number of smaller sketches – why the hell aren't these in the archive? If they were, we'd know this for sure.

TN

The drawing does feel like he is tracking towards a history painting.

GL

Yeah, it's a study. I feel quite confident that Webber had it in mind that this could be worked up as a major painting, because it was quite a significant moment. It was probably sitting there in his folio along with a few other similar things he could work up. And then Cook was killed. And we all know Webber from his most famous work, The death of Cook. That was his grand history painting...

TN

For whatever reason this drawing has an orphaned character, an image that never fully came into being. I think part of the reason he didn't make a painting or an engraving out of it is that it's quite an awkward composition. As you said earlier Rachael, it has this strange feature where literally half of the picture, the top half of the picture, is basically a kind of void. And I think the size of the paper produces a kind of awkwardness as well.

Figure 127c – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).



GL

The composition is not great. History paintings tend to have a sweep of diagonals. This is quite planar. In the death of Cook, you have the coastline sweeping away in the background, so there is a sense of depth.

TN

When we caught up last year we talked a lot about the way Webber's drawing anticipates The death of Cook. There is Cook's gesture, which is remarkably similar to the famous gesture in that painting. Both take place on a shoreline. Both have the same, very strong binary composition, with Europeans grouped on the left and the "natives" on the right. As you have pointed out, Greg, the Hawaiian who is about to kill Cook in The death of Cook is remarkably close to the physiognomy of the main Aboriginal figure in the Webber drawing, identical in his proximity to Cook, and occupies almost exactly the same position in the picture.

There are a lot of cues that suggest that The death of Cook assumes this Interview drawing as its preparatory image. Even if that is only on an unconscious level – and I suspect it's not unconscious, that it's a self-conscious relationship – I wonder if the fact that he used all these things about this Bruny Island drawing in The death of Cook was part of the drawing's redundancy. Having made The death of Cook, it's like...

GL

...it's already published.

TN

In other words, this earliest European image of contact is also the beginning of a pictorial chain, which runs through Webber's own The death of Cook up to Federation's most famous painting – the Emanuel Philips Fox painting, The landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay. Nick Thomas talks about how Philips Fox takes as the painting's central gesture Cook's gesture from Webber's The death of Cook, which is a gesture that really seems to originate here, in this Interview drawing. In a strange way this Webber drawing ends up mapping backwards to the earlier event – Cook at Botany Bay in 1770 – as well as forwards to Federation – Philips Fox's painting of the dubious origins of nationhood.

GL

Here is a question: was Webber there for the death of Cook? Was he in a position to know that this was going to happen, have

his sketchbook there and "whoooo. whooo whooo whooo. Hold on. The killing blow... I need to get that down". Maybe this drawing is the closest thing he had to a sketch of the scene in his portfolio.

TN

That's right. It's very unlikely he was there for Cook's death. That increases the stakes with this drawing. This is the place where he did see Cook negotiate an awkward relationship with indigenous people. And in turn he orchestrated that into this image, synthesising the encounter into this gesture.

GL

Yes, he's presenting one of those Cook medals. The voyage set out with 1500 of those Cook medals. They were handed out willy-nilly to natives along the way. This is one of those medals, mounted on a chain or ribbon.

TN

What do you understand it to be orchestrating to say, as a gesture, as a picture?

GL

This is about Cook's command of the situation. Cook is being generous and magnanimous, which of course is what the empire is (not!). Cook is representing the empire. The Aboriginal guy at the front is the leader, so there is recognition of Cook's authority, by virtue of the fact that a leader has stepped forward. There is an element of recognition of military protocol there. And this group of Aboriginal men regard the situation respectfully, and with attention. They're all men. So they're ceremonially bedecked, with their cicatrices, which gives the sense that they might be warriors. This is all drawing on previous imagery from North America, where head-dresses and body-painting were very symbolic of the warrior. Native North Americans served as allies with the British against the French. So in the Webber drawing, these are not just wild men, these are people that have a place in the empire, potentially as allies.

TN

So there is a different set of imperatives compared to later. These people are potential subjects of the empire, rather than people that need to be expunged.

Figure 127d – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).

GL

There is a gap in Tasmanian visual history where Aborigines are just absent – until John Glover starts putting them back in the landscape. When it's safe to do so, is what I would argue. Because the war was over. The Governor had shipped off the last resistance group to Flinders Island. All of a sudden Glover swoops in and starts populating the landscape again. And people are comfortable to stand around and solemnly shake their heads and say:

"Oh, yes, that was a terrible thing. But look, we can think about the time when they were happy".

And Glover himself writes on the back of some of his paintings that he hadn't witnessed more gaiety in the ballrooms of Europe than the corroborees that he witnessed in Van Diemen's Land. So it was all very nostalgic and romantic.

There are several very early paintings of Hobart Town and they don't have any Aboriginal people in them either. Apparently Aboriginal people withdrew from the area of Hobart Town initially, and they weren't seen. But people did come back. They were hanging around Hobart by the 1820s. But they're absent from images.

TN

That's part of the importance of this Webber drawing, that what follows is a relative paucity of picturing.

GL

Almost every European image that is created includes Aboriginal people, up until the end of the 18th century.

TN

They're all pictures made in the context of visiting. In a way, it's the difference between visiting and settling.

GL

The difference between the 18th century and the 19th century is British settlement here.

TN

I guess the logic of the settlement also produces its own imperatives: not picturing. Whereas visiting produces a type of curiosity, which is also present in the situation of the Webber drawing, the idea of a shoreline, where an encounter is quite brief.

GL

So was there a massive conspiracy, collectively on the part of the British, to create a *terra nullius*? I am being slightly facetious. I am not suggesting there was a directive from the art department of the colonial office in London to expunge any evidence of Aborigines. But was there a sentiment? Or was it a reflection of the fact that Aboriginal people were in very small numbers and had just made themselves scarce in those early few years. And there weren't too many artists around in those years either.

TN

I am trying to compare Webber's drawing to the late 18th-century French pictures made in Tasmania, the pictures we were looking at last night.

GL

The French had a different set of philosophies: the idea of the noble savage. They had Rousseau. Rousseau's idea was that humanity was neither good nor bad, but was corrupted by civilised social structure and hierarchy. The idea of ownership was what generated goodness and badness in people.

TN

What do you make of the fact that the central Aboriginal figure in Webber's drawing is speaking, that his mouth is drawn open, that the drawing is called an "Interview"?

GL

Again I'd think about that under that heading of generosity, which might be too generous: the idea that there was some equity in the encounter. I keep thinking of the implications of the North American colonies. It's too easy just to think about these nasty colonials turning up. They treated people like animals, so of course they only thought of them as flora and fauna, the whole rhetoric that we are surrounded with today. But the reality was much more complex than that. For example, the role that the Mohawk played in the conflict between the French and the British was absolutely pivotal. So these Aboriginal guys in the Webber drawing were more than just stupid natives. In terms of what may happen – and, no, the French hadn't been here yet – the French were always on the English mind in matters of empire, particularly

Figure 127e – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).



with naval people. Is it just generosity, or is it actually something much more serious and robust: "Wherever we go we must be thinking about the potential for allies", or at least just cannon fodder.

TN

I sometimes think about the Webber drawing in relation to Benjamin Duterreau's The Conciliation. There are quite strong compositional echoes, and gestural ones too, as well as an undercurrent in both images, around the sovereign and around how sovereignty is pictured. Last night we were talking about that Duterreau image and you were saying that for Aboriginal people in Tasmania that picture is so laden with the worst dimensions of colonial thinking that it's hard to re-animate it in another way. Does this Webber drawing operate differently in that respect, for you or for Aboriginal people in Tasmania generally? Does its meaning function differently to the Duterreau image?

GL

I think it's very different. The Duterreau painting is so laden with event and moment and consequence and implication and deceit and treachery. Because that is the moment a treaty is discussed. Several treaties were discussed with Aboriginal people – and that was the last one that was discussed with them. And it was the one that convinced an armed resistance group to surrender. George Augustus Robinson told them that if they went with him to Hobart Town he would arrange a meeting with the Governor, and the Governor would agree to all their requests. That's what they were told. And so that moment of the handshake is them accepting that assurance. And of course when they got to Hobart they were shipped off to Flinders Island, and the war was over.

Whereas here... the portent of that scene in the Webber drawing is even more extensive. It occurs before the *whole* saga, in its entirety, before British colonisation. But it's less pointed, it's less focussed, in terms of consequence. If it had been worked up into a painting, and it had been there on the wall of a museum, and published in history books more often, and in the school curriculum, and more celebrated and recognised, the narrative of the painting might have been more developed. And the things that it symbolised might have been drawn out more, to the extent that you could be

describing that moment as buying off the confidence of the Aborigines and supplanting them with the idea of *terra nullius*. You could load that painting up.

TN

That's interesting. Because in a way this drawing is like the Duterreau painting. It contains sovereign claims implicitly. Cook is made to be the central, beneficent character. But what you're saying is that partly because it is never developed into an image to be distributed – in the sense of what an engraving literally is, but also in the sense that a painting distributes a certain idea of something or a particular claim – that leaves the drawing as a more open thing...

GL

...less defined.

TN

It bears that sovereign imprint less heavily.

GL

It doesn't obtain the same power as an instrument of visual history.

*Walking towards the rocky point shown at the right of Webber's drawing*

GL

There is a midden right on top of here.

*Climbing on to headland, then picking up a shell from the ground.*

That's a *werrena* shell. Very tasty bit of seafood. In fact it's mostly *werrena*. You'd expect to find mussels and maybe oysters in a midden, but this looks to me to be largely *werrena*, which would have been gathered from these rocks that jut out here. In fact, it wouldn't be hard to find some out there now. And this would be... it looks thick enough to me for this to have been here for several hundred years. It means that Aboriginal people were camping right on this point. So the Aborigines didn't wander out of the bush. The British basically pulled up at one of their picnic spots.

TN

This form in the drawing – the rocky form that is the most worked up part of the drawing – is a midden?

GL

All this sitting on top of the rocks is an accumulation of hundreds possibly

Figure 127f – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).

thousands of years – middens are commonly two, three, four, five thousand years old. So all of this accumulation of soil on the top part of the form on the right of the drawing is the accumulation of midden material, around a camp. This is a typical camp spot. You camp here, and it commands an elevated view up and down the beach. You can see people coming, you can see what's going on, you can keep an eye on the kids.

TN

What you're saying now becomes a remarkable feature of this drawing. This is the most convincing and worked up part of the picture. And it has this rocky form, with its horizontal strata, that begins to make us attend to what is above it, and to think about layers, and time. It has been included presumably unwittingly, but maybe on some level intuitively. It's also a very classical European landscape thing to do, to have this form at the edge framing the scene. But either way, the presence of this midden becomes something extraordinary in what the picture shows.

GL

This is a major dividend of coming here today. All of a sudden we've identified that this form in the drawing is actually a midden. I didn't know that before.

TN

There are two registers of accumulation here. I think part of what is interesting about this drawing is the sense of gathering. There is the implication of a social space that Cook engages with. But there is also the way that these two things – the gathering of people that Webber depicts, and the rocky point in the foreground that we now realise is a midden – become the relationship between two modes of gathering, including a deep-time sense of gathering. The way these two modes are pictorially aligned, along a band of the drawing, is incredibly interesting.

GL

It's quite likely that the British would have recognised this as a midden, or as a hearth, or whatever they would have called it at the time. And it concentrates even more the bilateral nature of this picture.

Not only have you got all the Aboriginal people grouped to the right of the drawing, you also have a cultural deposit there on the right, which the British might not have known about.

But chances are they would have seen these shells and seen the charcoal.

TN

Part of what is interesting about pictures – as opposed to words, which of course can still contain Freudian slips – is that pictures let in lots of meanings that are not necessarily intended but are intuited. The framing in the drawing becomes really interesting in this way too. The relationship between what you identified earlier, about the very ghostly indication of a man hauling a log at the far left of the drawing, and this very solid form on the right, the rocky point, which is the point at which the drawing yields this archaeological space, sets up a relationship between these two perimeters of the picture.

GL

Well, they're both forms of industry, native industry and of course the much more focussed and determined and productive industry of the expedition.

*Walking up on to the top of the rocky point*

GL

At that time, this would almost certainly have been bare ground. There would have been a hearth, a campfire, up here. It wouldn't have been clogged with all this vegetation.

TN

There are two huge eucalyptus trees above us, the reason Cook named the point "Two Tree Point". It's another remarkable feature of this site – that we know from this name, and from late 18th-century pictorial records – that these two trees were present when Cook was here, when he encountered the Aboriginal men at this shoreline. How do you find the presence of the two trees here? There are many living things that live through these incredibly dramatic historical moments. But the fact that there are these two trees here – that seem to have been here the whole time, that were here when Webber stood here and conceptualised this picture – is quite a peculiar set of presences to try to reconcile in your head.

GL

Well, it's like we're in the company of some witnesses to the scene that this picture is all about. I have got a thing about trees (laughs). I don't differentiate as much as a lot of people do between animals and plants. People who think you've got to be ethical in your treatment

Figure 127g – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).



of animals and don't think about plants I think are taking a really simplistic view of things. Trees are just really really slow moving. They have a different mode of living in the environment than animals do. They're specialists in making the most of one spot.

TN

They're also monumentally, visually glorious, these two trees.

GL

The other thing to talk about too, is that Tasmanian Aboriginal people had what in other parts of Australia might be referred to as moiety relationships, or totemic relationships. That language is loosely relevant here. People were recorded as saying that they were related to particular kinds of trees, to Banksias or to particular kinds of gum trees. So these trees are not just however you might describe them in European nomenclature. They are beings that are commensurate to an individual's ontological identity.

TN

They are a way to express different types of affiliation between people, figured through trees?

GL

Yes, so the trees are not just inanimate, inert objects. They're not spiritually, cosmologically, ontologically inert. The presence of these trees is germane to the place. And that's just a slightly different way of describing something that is also describable from a European perspective. It's not secret sacred stuff.

TN

In a physiological sense I guess it's also true that these two trees are nourished by the midden. The roots must be burrowing into all those strata of living and eating together.

GL

Every shell that is thrown away is going to have some kind of organic protein material in it, which is eaten out by ants and the ants transfer it into the subsoil and pull the nutrients down for the trees. "The great circle of life".

TN

I can't quite get over the fact that this drawing is also the drawing of a midden, that this

earliest European image of contact is either inadvertently or unconsciously or semi-consciously also the drawing of a midden.

GL

Colonial artists were forever unknowingly recording cultural landscapes, without recognising them, whether they be fire-managed grasslands or middens.

TN

The presence of the midden performs something remarkable. The encounter, the part of the drawing that is a type of concoction or a projection that Webber tries to orchestrate in such an overt way, attempts to make a claim. It's a picture working towards sovereign ends, in the way that it instates Cook at the centre of the scene, and with a certain power over the scene. The presence of the midden in the drawing, either unconsciously or inadvertently, is a kind of a sovereign counter-claim.

GL

Yeah. It's a quiet presence. An immutable presence. An undeniable presence.

TN

It goes to what we were talking about last night. As much as you could understand the Webber drawing as being purely at the service of imperial ends – which it certainly is intended to be – it's also an unstable document. On the one hand it seems to be wanting to perform one thing, in terms of Cook's authority, but it actually records the beginning of a type of counter-claim: that this place has been occupied for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

GL

And isn't that a lovely analogue of what Cook tried and failed ultimately to do with his assertion of *terra nullius*. You can assert it, but the evidence is all there that it is just not the case.

TN

In relation to that history of invasion, it's curious to think of who is present at this scene. William Bligh is one of the people in the group of Europeans at the left. And probably Truganini's father is one of the young Aboriginal men. It's a scene that is witnessed by a fairly significant group of people. It's extraordinary that this first European image of contact takes place here on Bruny Island, as a link to some of the most significant figures in the early colonial period, both in Tasmania and the south east of Australia.

Figure 127h – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).

GL

I was last here on this beach a long time ago, before I even knew of the existence of the Webber drawing. *For me this has been experiencing this place as a completely different place.* I just did what I always do when I go to places, I spotted the nearest midden and tried to orient myself from there, to connect the midden to the shoreline by seeing if the main shellfish that the midden is made of are still around. There are a small number of *werrena* there, in the crevices of the rocks.

TN

The first time that Pete and I came to this site, I think retrospectively part of what was powerful for me was that it was wedged between two other encounters. It was after Pete had taken me to Dennes Point, in the north of Bruny Island, the main Aboriginal crossing point to Tasmania, where you have that incredibly strong sense of imagining centuries and centuries of meetings, on that stage-like point, which feels like it's a natural place where people would greet long-lost friends, or in some way ritualise that encountering-again. Then we came here, and quite by chance realised it was the site of the drawing, which prompted lots of thinking about Webber's image-making here.

The following day – I think I mentioned this to you last night Greg – I went to try to find the site of the old Hobart zoo. I ended up jumping the fence and wandered around in there. It's mostly completely effaced. There was something quite peculiar about finding the place where the Thylacine enclosure used to be. I realised it was a bit like this site here, where part of what you imagine is an act of making images. The site of the Thylacine enclosure for me so powerfully evoked that film footage, those 30 or so seconds of footage. In the same way, one of the main things I think about at this site is someone making an image here. It's a funny kind of spectre, when what you seek to imagine is itself the making of an image.

GL

It also just goes to show how much authorship a viewer brings to a picture. That sketch now has a midden in it that it didn't have before. Of course it always had a midden in it, but it never had a midden in it. Without wanting to get too semiotic about it, it just goes to show how much life is in the act of looking.

TN

That's part of the instability of picture making. Webber is actually producing a meaning that he doesn't know that he's producing.

GL

Is he producing it, or are we producing it? If he doesn't know that he's producing a meaning, is he producing a meaning? Or are we investing that drawing with something through our *post-factum* analysis and observation of the context?

TN

There is a kind of latency in the drawing that he's produced, don't you think? I do think there is an intuited dimension to this, that accounts for his inclusion of that rocky point. And also for the particular way that the rock formation does make these visual indications of strata, and almost cues the idea of a midden. As you said earlier, Greg, he did not then describe the midden in the drawing. You don't see the details or highlights of it overtly indicated. That latent set of meanings I find encouraging, both as a reason to continue to love art, because art works are full of these latencies that we can discover and then fully articulate, but also for political reasons. We can retrieve things out of those pictures that are otherwise connected to a pretty grim history, things that would make other possibilities emerge from them.

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Figure 127i – Tom Nicholson and Greg Lehman, *Interview*, 2016, off-set print and text, from a drawing by John Webber, multiple posters, two-sided image/text, exhibition take away, unlimited edition (detail).